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THE ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

VOLUME IV

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THE ESSAYS OF Montaigne

TRANSLATED BY GEORGE B. IVES

INTRODUCTIONS BY GRACE NORTON

VOLUME IV

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NOTE

When the first volume of this translation was printed, the proof-reading had progressed so little beyond that point that my acknowledgement of the assistance rendered me by certain persons was necessarily partial and imperfect.

Now that I have read for the last time the last word of the proof of the last page, I feel impelled to repeat with increased earnestness the expression of my profound gratitude to Mrs. Stewart, who has read, literally, every galley proof of the four volumes, and has, in addition, done work of inestimable value on the page proofs. And in justice to the whole proof-reading staff of the Harvard University Press, nearly every member of which has been involved to some extent in this labor, I can but recognise gratefully the interest and willing coöperation of all.

I am increasingly indebted to my good friend Evans, who has so generously given to the proofs of the later volumes the same painstaking expert scrutiny that he bestowed on volume one.

Even less is it possible for me to release my grasp upon this work of more than twelve years without a further word concerning Miss Norton's part in it. Throughout the long task of reading the proofs, I have been constantly reminded of my incalculable obligation to her for her never-failing assistance and encouragement, and I am more conscious to-day than ever of the very great value of her contribution to the work.

Salem, Massachusetts
2 November, 1925

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ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

THE THIRD BOOK

(CONTINUED)

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CHAPTER V

ON CERTAIN VERSES OF VIRGIL

VIRGIL'S lines, though so hidden away in the body of it, are in every sense the heart of this *flux de caquet, flux impetueux par fois et nuisible* (Montaigne's own words); or, if not *nuisible*, at least indelicate — lacking in the open reserve that wisely avoids speech concerning "the sacred secrets known to all."

The emotion that led Montaigne to "free" speech here and elsewhere (an emotion, I think, entirely removed from personal coarseness of nature — almost indeed the result of the opposite) was the mistaken belief that, as he says in Latin, *non pudet dicere, quod non pudet sentire.* He did not recognise — and perhaps his constant contact with heathen conceptions of the relations of man and woman somewhat stood in the way of his recognising — that the greatest mystery of human nature, the blending of the spiritual and the physical in sexual intercourse, the workings of the angel and the animal, that this mystery of human nature is but the environment of the divine mystery of the creation of life. Montaigne's eyes were attracted by the splendid parti-coloured clouds of the environment; he seems never to have gazed long at the central sun, that "alma Venus" of which Lucretius so magnificently sang.

> Quæ, quoniam rerum naturam sola gubernas
> Nec sine te quidquam divas in luminis oras
> Exoritur, neque fit lætum, neque amabile quidquam.[1]

Montaigne's constant contemplation of the coming of death seems never to have turned his thoughts, as it well might have done, to the preceding coming of life. He had no intimations of immortality from perceiving any trailing clouds of glory about himself; and it was simply *man* here — man neither before nor after his earthly birth and death — that interested him.

With all his conviction that we can know nothing with certainty, it was what we can (imperfectly) *know* that was his object of study. "Mysteries" were outside the scope of his consideration, and when his way was blocked by the great and awful mysteries that do exist, he simply took another path: *Je gauchis tout doucement.*

This renders his treatment, always, of the subject of these *vers de Virgile* trivial and uninteresting, exaggerated and paradoxical; but it is never gross, never repulsive, save in the licentiousness of his illustrations

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[1] Quoted by Montaigne with some changes. "Since thou then art sole mistress of the nature of things and without thee nothing rises up into the divine borders of light, nothing grows to be glad or lovely."

and especially his quotations, for which his times, more than he, may be blamed.

He handles with neither strength nor delicacy the whole question of the *place* of women in the world; and nevertheless from his own day to ours, women have been his warmest friends; because, I think, they value, more than any high appreciation of themselves, the qualities which he depicts himself as showing — and I believe truly — in his personal relations with them: honesty, fidelity, sincerity, and even generosity and respectfulness. And there is real delicacy of perception in such phrases as this in this Essay: "It costs her more to give this little than it costs another to give every thing." There is also truthfulness and discernment in the thought here expressed: "We are almost always incompetent judges of their actions, as they are of ours."

I think this Essay may have come about in this way. Reading Virgil, in what seemed to him his old age, and these verses recalling to him the rapturous heats of youth, he dwelt on them with pleasure, — "even any small occasions of pleasure that I meet with, I seize upon them," — dwelt on them with a delightful literary, as well as physical, pleasure; and then he began to question: "Why should n't I write of this pleasure, as well as feel it?" and from that there was but one step — sure to be taken — to "I will write of it." And he wrote with

> "the glowing of such fire
> As on the ashes of his youth did lie."

A few special passages are perhaps worth remarking on, some of them for the sake of noting such connection with passages in others of the Essays as indicates the permanence in Montaigne's mind of the opinion expressed.

Very near the beginning he says: "Wisdom has her excesses, and has no less need than folly of moderation"; and we are reminded that one of the inscriptions in his library was: *Ne plus sapias quam necesse est, ne obstupiscas.*

In an earlier Essay, Montaigne criticises as regards its *sound* — its "numbers" — a sentence of Cicero in the *De Senectute: Ego vero me minus diu senem esse mallem, quam esse senem antequam essem.* That he sympathised with the thought is proved by his here translating the sentence and accepting it as his own — since he gives no hint that it is quoted: *J'aime mieux estre moins long temps vieil que d'estre vieil avant de l'estre.*

When Montaigne exclaims, on this same page, "Would I could take pleasure in playing with nuts or with a top! *Non ponebat enim rumores ante salutem,*" he drolly diminishes the sense, the weight, that this line has in the original. Cicero (*De Officiis*, I, 24) quotes it (from Ennius) when contrasting the conduct of Quintus Maximus (Fabius) with that of Cleombrotus, who, fearing odium, rashly gave battle to Epaminondas, whereby the power of the Lacedæmonians perished: *Quanto Q. Fabius Maximus melius! de quo Ennius:*

Unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem:
Non ponebat enim rumores ante salutem.
Ergo postque magisque viri nunc gloria claret.[1]

Montaigne's humorously familiar use of this quotation suggests that it was a phrase that had sunk into his mind from the force of its serious meaning. It may be remembered that he says in another place:

"My citations do not always serve simply as comment. I do not regard them solely in the light of the use that I make of them; they often have in them, beyond what I say, the seed of a richer and bolder meaning; and often indirectly a more subtle suggestion, both for me who do not wish to express myself more fully and for those readers who enter into my thought."

One of the most animated expressions of Montaigne's eager love of society — of *companionship* — occurs here: "If there be any one, any pleasant party, in country, in city, in France, or elsewhere, resident or travelling, to whom my temperament may be agreeable and whose temperaments may be agreeable to me, they have but to whistle and I will go to them and supply them with essays in flesh and bone." With this passage may be connected another in a later Essay, where, after repeating what he says here, that if he came to the knowledge of any man of worth who liked his writings he would readily go to him even if he were far off, "for the delightfulness of an agreeable companion can not be too highly bought, to my thinking," he adds that no long familiarity would be necessary for friendship, since *ce registre* completely reveals him.

What he says of the virtue of chastity concerning itself only with the will is a text which might be considered with advantage to-day. And the way in which in these pages, and the following ones on jealousy, he sets forth the conditions of social life may suggest the most serious considerations regarding the undesirableness of holding theories that are at variance with facts.

The eloquent page on *le bien dire*, and the following ones, are a vigorous enlargement of the same thought in the Essay "Of the Education of Children."

The passage immediately following, on his conditions in writing and on what "I have said to myself," can not be too carefully read and pondered as shewing not only his philosophy of his own authorship, but his singularly careful and discerning judgement of his own writings; and I think special stress should be laid on the "You often trifle deceptively," all the more that it is a posthumous addition. It seems to me to indicate that he had perceived himself to be often misunderstood in this respect.

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[1] How preferable was the conduct of Quintus Maximus, of whom Ennius says: "One man, by temporising, set right our affairs; he indeed did not consider public sayings as much as the safety of the country, and therefore the glory of that man shines now and hereafter, and ever more brightly."

When he says, "Some of my earliest Essays have a borrowed flavour," we must wonder whether he meant that they were derived from the ancients or his contemporaries.

What he says of the impromptu character of the activity of his mind, of his deepest and his gayest thoughts coming to him unexpectedly, usually in conversation, and when he could not put them on paper, is extremely interesting. What a loss to the world that he had no Boswell!

The "leaving books aside" connects itself logically with the "Let us leave Bembo and Equicola" of a previous page; the intermediate personal passage is quite a thing apart.

Skipping four or five pages, we come to the passage beginning: "What a monstrous animal" (is the man who shuns health and cheerfulness), which conveys in its very effective phrasing a warning of striking character to all the Pascal class of minds. It connects itself in feeling with a later page in this same Essay, where Montaigne declares that it is only reasonable for us to accept pleasure as readily as we do pain. And in one of the last pages he dwells on the double power of the soul, both to cherish bodily pleasure and to infuse into the body enjoyment of pleasure of her own.

PROFITABLE thoughts, the more pithy and solid they are, are also the more troublesome and burdensome. Vice, death, poverty, maladies are grave and grievous matters. The soul must needs be instructed as to the means of supporting and combatting ills, and instructed as to the rule for right living and right thinking, and must often be aroused and exercised in this noble study; but with a common sort of soul this must needs be with intervals and moderation: such a one is weakened by being kept too continually strained.

In my youth I had need to admonish myself and look carefully after myself, to keep me to my duty; good spirits and health do not consist so well, they say, with serious and wise reflections. I am now in a different condition; the accompaniments of old age admonish me only too much, teach me wisdom, and preach to me. From excess of gaiety I have fallen into the more irksome excess of gravity; therefore, I now allow myself designedly to indulge a little in disorderly ways, and sometimes employ my soul in lively and youthful thoughts, where it makes holiday. I am at present only too sober, too pondering, and too mature: my years daily instruct me in insensibility and temperance. This body shuns and fears irregularity; it is taking its turn to

lead the mind toward reformation; in its turn it holds sway, and more harshly and imperiously; not for a single hour, sleeping or waking, does it leave me at rest from teaching about death, endurance, and repentance. I guard myself from temperance as I used to do from enjoyment; it draws me too far back, even to dulness; now I desire to be master of myself in all ways. Wisdom has her excesses, and has no less need than folly of moderation. And so, for fear lest I dry up, wither, and wax mouldy from prudence, I quietly turn aside in the intervals of my bodily ills, —

Mens intenta suis ne siet usque malis,[1] —

and avert my eyes from that stormy and cloudy sky which I have before me, and which, God be praised! I regard quite without fear but not without debate and meditation; and I set about to amusing myself with the remembrance of past follies.

Animus quod perdidit optat,
Atque in præterita se totus imagine versat.[2]

Let childhood look forward, old age backward; was not that the significance of the double face of Janus? The years drag me along if they will, but with backward steps. So long as my eyes can discern that pleasant lost season, I now and then turn them thither. Though it escapes from my blood and my veins, at least I will not uproot its image from my memory;

hoc est
Vivere bis, vita posse priore frui.[3]

(*c*) Plato advises old men to be present at the exercises, dances, and games of the young, in order to be gladdened by the agility and beauty of the body in others which is theirs no longer, and to recall to their memory the charms and comeliness of that blooming age; and desires that in those sports they should attribute the honour of victory to the youth who

[1] Lest my mind be intent on its own troubles. — Ovid, *Tristia*, IV, 1.4. The original has *ne foret*, instead of *ne siet*.

[2] The mind longs for what it has lost, and in imagination throws itself altogether into the past. — Petronius, *Satyricon*, 128.

[3] To be able to enjoy one's past life is to live twice. — Martial, X, 23.7.

shall have most exhilarated and gladdened the greater number of them.[1] (*b*) Formerly I used to mark dull and gloomy days as unusual; these are now the usual ones for me, the unusual are those that are fine and cloudless. I am ready to jump for joy as for an unwonted blessing when nothing pains me. If I try to please,[2] I can scarcely now draw a poor smile from this wretched body. I make merry merely in fancy and in waking dreams, to drive away by cunning the pensiveness of old age; but it is certain that this needs another remedy than such dreams; this is a feeble struggle of art against nature. It is great foolishness to prolong and anticipate human disadvantages as every one does; I like better to be old less long than to be old before I am so;[3] I seize upon the slightest opportunities for enjoyment that I can meet with. I know well by hearsay many kinds of wise pleasures, strong and highly praised; but belief in these has not enough power over me to give me an appetite for them. (*c*) I do not so much want them to be lofty and magnificent and proud, as delicious and easy and near at hand; *a natura discedimus; populo nos damus, nullius rei bono auctori.*[4] (*b*) My philosophy is of action, of natural and immediate practice, little of conceptions; would I could take pleasure in playing with nuts or with a top!

Non ponebat enim rumores ante salutem.[5]

Pleasure is a quality of little ambition; it thinks itself rich enough in itself without the prize of fame being added, and prefers to be in the shade. A young man ought to be whipped who should occupy himself in discovering the taste of wines and sauces; there is nothing that I have less known and less value; to-day I am learning it. I am greatly ashamed of this, but what can I do about it? I am even more ashamed and vexed by the occasions that drive me to it. It is for us to dream and idle, and for the youthful to

[1] See Plato, *Laws*, book II.

[2] *Que je me chatouille.*

[3] See Cicero, *De Senectute*, X. Montaigne quoted this passage, in Latin, in Book II, chap. 10 (Vol. II, p. 145).

[4] We forsake nature; we give ourselves to the people, who are in no wise good guides. — Seneca, *Epistle* 99.

[5] He did not place popular rumours before the safety of the State. — Ennius, in Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 24.

make themselves of repute and value; they are advancing toward the world, toward authority; we are leaving it; (*c*) *sibi arma, sibi equos, sibi hastas, sibi clavam, sibi pilam, sibi natationes et cursus habeant; nobis senibus, ex lusionibus multis, talos relinquant et tesseras;* [1] (*b*) the very laws send us into retirement.[2] I can do no less in favour of this forlorn state into which my years force me than supply it with toys and amusements, as it were childhood; indeed, we fall back into that. Both wisdom and folly will have hard work [3] to support and succour me by alternating services in this calamity of age.

Misce stultitiam consiliis brevem.[4]

I avoid even the slightest pricks, and those which in other days would not have scratched me now pierce me; my bodily habit begins to incline so easily to all conditions! (*c*) *In fragili corpore odiosa omnis offensio est.*[5]

(*b*) Mensque pati durum sustinet ægra nihil.[6]

I have always been susceptible and sensitive to harmful things; I am now more thin-skinned and everywhere exposed,

Et minimæ vires frangere quassa valent.[7]

My judgement prevents me, indeed, from kicking and grumbling at the discomforts that Nature ordains me to suffer, but not from feeling them. I would go from one end of the world to the other in quest of a gracious year of agreeable and blithe tranquillity, for I have no other aim than to live cheerfully. Of sombre and dull tranquillity there is enough for me, but it puts me to sleep and makes me

[1] For them let there be arms, and for them horses and spears and foils and balls and swimming and races; and of all the many games let them leave us old men the knuckle-bones and the dice. — Cicero, *De Senectute*, XVI.

[2] See *Ibid.*, XI. [3] *Auront prou.*

[4] Mingle a little folly with your wisdom. — Horace, *Odes*, IV, 12.27.

[5] To a feeble body every mishap is hateful. — Cicero, *De Senectute*, XVIII.

[6] A sick mind can not endure any thing disagreeable. — Ovid, *De Ponto*, I, 5.18.

[7] And the least effort is enough to break what is already cracked. — Idem, *Tristia*, III, 11.22.

heavy-headed; I am not pleased with it. If there be any one, any pleasant party, in country, in city, in France, or elsewhere, resident or travelling, to whom my temperament may be agreeable and whose temperaments may be agreeable to me, they have but to whistle and I will go to them and supply them with essays in flesh and bone.

Since it is the privilege of the mind to hold his[1] own in old age, I advise him most earnestly to do so; let him grow green and flourish the while, if he can, like mistletoe on a dead tree. I fear that he is a traitor; he is so closely united to the body that he abandons me continually to follow that in its need. I privately flatter him, I frequent him, to no purpose; in vain do I try to withdraw him from this association and offer to his view Seneca and Catullus, and ladies, and royal dances; if his companion has the stone, it seems as if he had it also. Even the powers which are peculiar to him and especially his own can not then be roused; they are evidently chilled. There is no animation in his doings if at the time there is none in the body.

(*c*) Our masters mistake in this, when seeking the causes of the unusual sudden movements of the mind, that besides what they attribute of these to a divine transport, to love, to martial vehemence, to poesy, to wine, they have not assigned to health its share in them — to ebullient, lusty, solid, unbusied health, such as in other days the springtime of life and absence of care supplied me with uninterruptedly.[2] This fire of gaiety kindles in the mind flashes vivid and bright beyond our natural brightness, and the most lively, if not the most wide-reaching,[3] of our inspirations. Now truly, it is no wonder if a contrary condition weighs down my mind, fetters it, and draws from it a contrary effect.

(*b*) Ad nullum consurgit opus, cum corpore languet.[4]

And yet the mind insists that I am beholden to him for yielding, he says, much less to this connection than is the

[1] Throughout this paragraph the personal pronoun refers to the mind.

[2] *Par venues.* [3] *Esperdus.*

[4] It rises to no task when the body is faint. — Maximianus (Pseudo-Gallus), I, 125.

ordinary habit of men. At all events, while we are at truce, let us banish evils and difficulties from our intercourse;

Dum licet, obducta solvatur fronte senectus; [1]

tetrica sunt amœnanda jocularibus.[2] I love a cheerful and courteous wisdom, and shun harshness of manners and austerity, being suspicious of all grimness of aspect,

(*c*) Tristemque vultus tetrici arrogantiam;[3]

(*b*) Et habet tristis quoque turba cynædos.[4]

(*c*) I heartily agree with Plato, who says that an easy or difficult disposition has great influence on the goodness or badness of the soul.[5] Socrates had a uniform countenance, but serene and smiling; [6] not disagreeably uniform, like the elder Crassus, who was never seen to smile.[7] (*b*) Virtue is a charming and gay quality.

(*c*) I am quite sure that very few persons will frown at the freedom of my writings who have not more reason to frown at the freedom of their thoughts. I fit well enough with their humour, but I offend their eyes. It is a fine way to do, to be familiar with Plato's writings,[8] and to glide over his alleged relations with Phædo, Dion, Stella, and Archeanassa.[9] *Non pudeat dicere quod non pudet sentire.*[10] (*b*) I detest an ever-complaining and melancholy mind, which glides over the joys of life and seizes and feeds upon its woes; like flies, which can not hold their footing on a very smooth and very slippery body, and cling to and rest on

[1] While we may, let clouded old age put away its frown. — Horace, *Epodes*, XIII, 5. *Dum licet* is Montaigne's substitution for *Et decet.*

[2] We ought to make gloomy experiences pleasant by jesting. — Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistles*, I, 9.

[3] And the mournful arrogance of a crabbed countenance. — George Buchanan, *John the Baptist*, Prologue, 31.

[4] And this sad-faced band also has its wantons. — Martial, VII, 58.9.

[5] See the *Laws*, book VII, near the beginning; also the *Timæus*, near the end.

[6] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, III, 15. [7] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 19.

[8] *C'est une humeur bien ordonnée de pinser les escris de Platon.*

[9] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato.*

[10] One need not be ashamed to say what one is not ashamed to think. — Source unknown.

rough and uneven surfaces; and like cupping-glasses, too, which draw up and suck only bad blood.[1] I have determined to dare to say every thing that I dare to do, and I dislike thoughts even that are not fit to publish. The worst of my actions and conditions does not seem to me so vile as I find vile and cowardly the not daring to avow it. Every one is discreet in confession; one should be so in action; boldness in doing wrong is in some sort atoned for and held in check by boldness in confession. (*c*) He who should oblige himself to tell every thing would oblige himself to do nothing about which we are forced to be silent. God grant that the excess of my free-speaking may lead our men toward liberty, rising above these dastardly and hypocritical virtues born of our imperfections, that at the expense of my extravagance I may lead them on even to the point of good sense! To tell of one's vice, it must be seen and studied. They who conceal it from others usually conceal it from themselves, and do not deem it sufficiently hidden if they see it; they withdraw it, and disguise it to their own consciousness. *Quare vitia sua nemo confitetur? Quia etiam nunc in illis est; somnium narrare vigilantis est.*[2] The ills of the body are revealed by growing worse; we find that what we call a cold or a sprain is gout. The ills of the soul are obscured by their strength; the most diseased man is least aware of them.[3] It is because of this that they must often be brought to life with a pitiless hand, laid bare, and torn from the depths of our bosom. As in the matter of good deeds, so likewise in the matter of evil deeds, there is sometimes satisfaction in confession. Is there any repulsiveness in misdoing which dispenses us from confession? (*b*) It pains me to dissemble, so that I avoid taking another man's secret into my keeping, not having the courage to disavow my knowledge; I can be silent about it, but deny it I can not without an effort and discomfort. To be very secret, one must be so by nature, not by obligation. It is little, in the service of princes, to be secret if one be not also

[1] See Plutarch, *Of the tranquillity of the mind.*

[2] Why is it that no one confesses his own faults? Because he is still subject to them; it is only a waking man who can tell his dream. — Seneca, *Epistle* 53.

[3] See *Ibid.*

a liar. Celuy qui s'enquestoit à Thales Milesius s'il devoit solemnellement nier d'avoir paillardé, s'il se fut addressé à moy, je luy eusse respondu qu'il ne le devoit pas faire, car le mentir me semble encore pire que la paillardise. Thales conseilla tout autrement, et qu'il jurast, pour garentir le plus par le moins.[1] Toutesfois ce conseil n'estoit pas tant election de vice que multiplication. Sur quoy, disons ce mot en passant, qu'on faict bon marché à un homme de conscience quand on luy propose quelque difficulté au contrepois du vice; mais, quand on l'enferme entre deux vices, on le met à un rude chois, comme on fit Origene: ou qu'il idolatrast, ou qu'il se souffrit jouyr charnellement à un grand vilain Æthiopien qu'on luy presenta. Il subit la premiere condition, et vitieusement, dict on.[2] Pourtant ne seroient pas sans goust, selon leur erreur, celles qui nous protestent, en ce temps, qu'elles aymeroient mieux charger leur conscience de dix hommes que d'une messe.

Whether it be indiscreet or not thus to publish one's errors, there is no great danger that it will become a precedent and custom; for Aristo said that the winds that men most fear are those that uncover them.[3] We must tuck away this absurd old mantle that hides our nature.[4] Men send their conscience to the brothel and keep their demeanour in good order. Even traitors and assassins bind themselves by conventional laws and connect with them what they are doing;[5] nevertheless, it is not for what is unlawful to blame what is anti-social, (*c*) nor for deceit to find fault with indiscretion. It is a pity that a sinful man is not a fool as well and that decency palliates his vice. Such facings[6] befit only a good sound wall, which deserves to be preserved and to be whitened.

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Thales*.
[2] See Nicephorus, *Ecclesiastical History*, V, 32.
[3] See Plutarch, *Of Curiosity*.
[4] *Nos mœurs*.
[5] *Espousent les loix de la ceremonie et attachent là leur devoir*. The thought in this puzzling sentence seems to be that even criminals connect their deeds with external propriety; but it is not for those who sin against the law to find fault with those who (in their eyes) sin against society.
[6] *Incrustations*.

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(*b*) In support of the Huguenots, who denounce our auricular and private confession, I confess in public, solemnly and sincerely. St. Augustine, Origen, and Hippocrates have made known the errors of their opinions, and I of my character. I am eager to make myself known, and I care not how fully,[1] so that it be truly; or, to put it better, I have no eagerness at all, but I mortally shun the being mistaken for a different man by those who chance to know my name.[2] He who does all things for honour and for renown, what does he think to gain by showing himself to the world masked, concealing his real self from the knowledge of the crowd? Praise a hunchback for his fine figure — he has reason to receive it as an insult; if you are a coward and men honour you as a brave man, is it you who are talked of? They take you for another. I had as lief a fellow who is one of the least of the train should take pleasure in the capdoffings of those who think that he is the head of the troop. As Archelaus, King of Macedonia, was passing through the streets, some one poured water on him. The bystanders said that he ought to punish the man. "But, indeed," he declared, "he did not pour the water on me, but on him whom he thought I was."[3] (*c*) Socrates replied to him who informed him that he was spoken ill of, "Not at all; there is nothing of me in what they say."[4] (*b*) For my part, if any one should praise me for being a good pilot, for being very modest, or for being very chaste, I should owe him no thanks; and likewise, if one should call me a traitor, a robber, or a drunkard, I should deem myself as little insulted. They who do not know themselves may feed upon undeserved approbation; not I, who see myself and scrutinise myself even to my bowels, and who know well what appertains to me. I am pleased to be less praised, provided that I am better known. (*c*) I might be considered a wise man for wisdom of such sort as I consider to be folly. (*b*) Je m'en-

[1] *Et ne me chaut à combien.*

[2] At this point Montaigne wrote, then erased, on the margin of the Bordeaux copy: *Plesante fantasie! Plusieurs choses que je voudrois dire à persone je le dis au peuple. Et sur mes plus secretes sciences et pensees renvoie à mon livre mes plus privez amis.*

[3] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.

[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Socrates.*

nuie que mes essais servent les dames de meuble commun seulement, et de meuble de sale; ce chapitre me fera du cabinet. J'ayme leur commerce un peu privé; le publique est sans faveur et saveur. Aux adieus, nous eschauffons outre l'ordinaire l'affection envers les choses que nous abandonnons. Je prens l'extreme congé des jeux du monde, voicy nos dernieres accolades.

Mais venons à mon theme. Qu'a faict l'action genitale aux hommes, si naturelle, si necessaire et si juste, pour n'en oser parler sans vergongne et pour l'exclurre des propos serieux et reglez? Nous prononçons hardiment: tuer, desrober, trahir; et cela, nous n'oserions qu'entre les dents? Est-ce à dire que moins nous en exhalons en parole, d'autant nous avons loy d'en grossir la pensée? [1] (*c*) Car il est bon que les mots qui sont le moins en usage, moins escris et mieux teus, sont les mieux sceus et plus generalement cognus. Nul aage, nulles meurs l'ignorent non plus que le pain. Ils s'impriment en chascun sans estre exprimez et sans voix et sans figure. Il est bon aussi que c'est une action que nous avons mis en la franchise du silence, d'ou c'est crime de l'arracher, non pas mesme pour l'accuser et juger. Ny n'osons la foiter qu'en periphrase et peinture. Grand faveur à un criminel d'estre si execrable que la justice estime injuste de le toucher et de le voir: libre et sauvé par le benefice de l'aigreur de sa condamnation. N'en va il pas comme en matiere de livres, qui se rendent d'autant plus venaux et publiques de ce qu'ils sont supprimez? Je m'en vai pour moi prendre au mot l'avis d'Aristote qui dict l'estre honteus servir d'ornement à la jeunesse, mais de reproche à la vieillesse.[2]

(*b*) Ces vers se preschent en l'escole ancienne, escole à laquelle je me tiens bien plus qu'à la moderne (*c*) (ses vertus me semblent plus grandes, ses vices moindres):

> (*b*) Ceux qui par trop fuyant Venus estrivent,
> Faillent autant que ceux qui trop la suivent.[3]

[1] Cf. Cicero, *Epistles*, IX, 22.

[2] See the *Nicomachæan Ethics*, IV, 9.

[3] Verses of Amyot, from his translation of Plutarch, *That a philosopher should hold converse with princes.*

Tu, Dea, tu rerum naturam sola gubernas,
Nec sine te quicquam dias in luminis oras
Exoritur, neque fit lætum nec amabile quicquam.[1]

Je ne sçay qui a peu mal mesler Pallas et les Muses avec Venus, et les refroidir envers l'Amour; mais je ne voy aucunes deitez qui s'aviennent mieux, ny qui s'entredoivent plus. Qui ostera aux muses les imaginations amoureuses, leur desrobera le plus bel entretien qu'elles ayent et la plus noble matiere de leur ouvrage; et qui fera perdre à l'amour la communication et service de la poesie, l'affoiblira de ses meilleures armes: par ainsin on charge le Dieu d'accointance et de bien-vueillance, et les deesses protectrices d'humanité et de justice, du vice d'ingratitude et de mesconnoissance.

Je ne suis pas de si long temps cassé de l'estat et suitte de ce dieu que je n'aye la memoire informée de ses forces et valeurs;

agnosco veteris vestigia flammæ.[2]

Il y a encore quelque demeurant d'emotion et chaleur apres la fiévre;

Nec mihi deficiat calor hic, hiemantibus annis.[3]

Tout asseché que je suis et appesanty, je sens encore quelques tiedes restes de cette ardeur passée:

Qual l'alto Ægeo, per che Aquilone o Noto
Cessi, che tutto prima il vuolse et scosse,
Non s'accheta ei pero: ma'l sono e'l moto,
Ritien de l'onde anco agitate è grosse.[4]

Mais de ce que je m'y entends, les forces et valeur de ce dieu se trouvent plus vives et plus animées en la peinture de la poesie qu'en leur propre essence,

Et versus digitos habet.[5]

[1] Lucretius, I, 21. The first three words are adapted from line 6: *Te, dea, te.*
[2] Virgil, *Æneid*, IV, 23.
[3] Jean Second, *Elegies*, I, 3.29.
[4] Tasso, *Gierusalemma Liberata*, XII, 63.
[5] Juvenal, VI, 196.

Elle represente je ne sçay quel air plus amoureux que l'amour mesme. Venus n'est pas si belle toute nue, et vive, et haletante, comme elle est icy chez Virgile:

> Dixerat, et niveis hinc atque hinc diva lacertis
> Cunctantem amplexu molli fovet. Ille repente
> Accepit solitam flammam, notusque medullas
> Intravit calor, et labefacta per ossa cucurrit.
> Non secus atque olim tonitru cum rupta corusco
> Ignea rima micans percurrit lumine nimbos.
> . . . Ea verba loquutus,
> Optatos dedit amplexus, placidumque petivit
> Conjugis infusus gremio per membra soporem.[1]

Ce que j'y trouve à considerer, c'est qu'il la peinct un peu bien esmeue pour une Venus maritale. En ce sage marché, les appetits ne se trouvent pas si follastres; ils sont sombres et plus mousses. L'amour hait qu'on se tienne par ailleurs que par luy, et se mesle lâchement aux accointances qui sont dressées et entretenues soubs autre titre, comme est le mariage: l'alliance, les moyens, y poisent par raison, autant ou plus que les graces et la beauté. On ne se marie pas pour soy, quoi qu'on die; on se marie autant ou plus pour sa posterité, pour sa famille. L'usage et interest du mariage touche nostre race bien loing par delà nous. Pourtant me plait cette façon, qu'on le conduise plustost par mains tierces que par les propres, et par le sens d'autruy que par le sien. Tout cecy, combien à l'opposite des conventions amoureuses! Aussi est ce une espece d'inceste d'aller employer à ce parentage venerable et sacré les efforts et les extravagances de la licence amoureuse, comme il me semble avoir dict ailleurs.[2] Il faut, dict Aristote, toucher sa femme prudemment et severement, de peur qu'en la chatouillant trop lascivement le plaisir la face sortir hors des gons de raison. Ce qu'il dict pour la conscience, les medecins le disent pour la santé:[3] qu'un plaisir excessivement chaut, voluptueux et assidu altere la semence et empesche la conception; disent d'autrepart, qu'à une congression languis-

[1] Virgil, *Æneid*, VIII, 387–392, 404.
[2] See Book I, chap. 30 (Vol. I, pp. 264 ff.).
[3] Cf. Plutarch, *Of the opinion of philosophers* (Diocles).

sante, comme celle la est de sa nature, pour la remplir d'une juste et fertile chaleur, il s'y faut presenter rarement et à notables intervalles,

Quo rapiat sitiens venerem interiusque recondat.[1]

Je ne vois point de mariages qui faillent plustost et se troublent que ceux qui s'acheminent par la beauté et desirs amoureux. Il y faut des fondemens plus solides et plus constans, et y marcher d'aguet; cette bouillante allegresse n'y vaut rien.

They who think to honour marriage by joining love with it proceed, it seems to me, like those who, to favour virtue, maintain that nobility is nothing else than virtue.[2] They are things which have some affinity; but therewith great diversity; we should not confound their names and their titles; we wrong both the one and the other by confusing them. Nobility is an admirable function, and invented with good reason; but inasmuch as it is a function that is dependent upon others and that may belong to a man who is vicious and worthless, it is of a value very far below that of virtue; if it be a virtue,[3] it is an artificial and visible one, dependent upon time and fortune; different in form in different countries; belonging to this life [4] and mortal; as much without origin as the river Nile; a thing of genealogy and generality; that passes from one man to another with no change; that is derived from the force of preceding conditions — a very feeble force.[5] Knowledge, strength, goodness, beauty, wealth, all other qualities have relation to communication and intercourse; this one is fulfilled in itself, of no commerce in the service of others. There was offered to one of our kings the choice between two competitors for the same post,

[1] Virgil, *Georgics*, III, 137.

[2] This passage must be interpreted by recognising the signification to Montaigne of the words *noblesse* and *vertu*. *Noblesse* indicated to him the position of men of rank — not only of high rank, but all those above "the people" and outside the clergy, physicians, scholars, and the like. *Vertu* to him did not so much imply goodness, as the quality of a gentleman, especially the quality of manliness. — G. N.

[3] That is, if in its habitual qualities it resembles virtue.

[4] *Vivante.*

[5] *Genealogique et commune; de suite et de similitude; tirée par consequence, et consequence bien foible.*

of whom one was of good birth, the other not at all so. He ordered that, without regard to this difference, the one who had the most merit should be chosen; but if their worth were exactly the same, then the point of birth should be regarded; this was giving it its just rank. Antigonus, when an untried youth [1] asked him for the post of his father, a man of worth who had recently died, "My friend," he said, "in such favours I do not so much consider the rank of my soldiers as I do their prowess." (*c*) In truth, it should not be as with the officials of the kings of Sparta, — trumpeters, minstrels, cooks, — who were succeeded by their children in their offices, however ignorant they might be, in preference to the most experienced in the occupation.[2] The people of Calicut treat their nobles as more than human. Marriage is forbidden them and all other vocations than war. Of concubines they can have their fill, and the women as many lovers, without jealousy of one another; but it is a capital and irremissible crime to mate with a person of another rank than their own, and they deem themselves polluted if they are merely touched by such a one in passing; and as their nobility is wondrously wronged and dishonoured by this, they kill those who have merely come a little too near them; so that those of low birth [3] are required to cry aloud as they walk, — as the gondoliers in Venice do at street corners, — in order not to hit against one another; and the nobles order them to turn to this side or that, as they [4] choose. Thus they avoid the ignominy which they regard as lasting; the others, certain death. No length of time, no princely favour, no office or virtue or wealth can transform a plebeian into a noble. These conditions are favoured by this custom, that marriages between persons of different trades are forbidden: a woman of a shoemaking family may not marry a carpenter; and parents are compelled to train their children to the father's precise occupation and to no other, whereby the distinction and continuance of their lot is maintained.[5]

[1] He was the son of a well-born centurion, but was idle and a coward. See Plutarch, *Of false Shame*.

[2] See Herodotus, VI, 60. [3] *Les ignobles*. [4] The nobles.

[5] See Goulard, *Histoire du Portugal*, II, 3.

(*b*) A good marriage, if there are such, rejects the company and conditions of love; it strives to show forth those of friendship. It is a calm fellowship of life, full of fidelity, of trust, and of an endless number of useful and substantial mutual duties and obligations; no woman who rightly perceives its savour, —

Optato quam junxit lumine tæda,[1] —

would desire to be in the place of mistress to her husband. If she be established in his affection as a wife, she is therein much more honourably and securely established. If he be elsewhere excited and eager, let him none the less be asked which he would prefer should be put to shame, his wife or his mistress; whose misfortune would grieve him most; for which he desires a higher position; these questions[2] admit no doubt in a sound marriage. That we see so few good marriages is a sign of its price and its value. If well formed and well regarded,[3] there is no more admirable feature of our social life. We can not do without it, and yet we express contempt for it. The same thing happens that we see about cages: the birds outside are in despair at not getting in, and those within feel equal discomfort at not getting out. (*c*) Socrates, being asked which was more advantageous, to take or not to take a wife, replied: "Whichever a man does, he will repent it."[4] (*b*) It is a covenant to which the saying, *Homo homini* either *deus* or *lupus*,[5] aptly applies; the meeting of many qualities is needed to frame it. It is in these days apparently best fitted for simple and common souls, with whom pleasures, curiosity, and idleness do not so much disturb it. Natures such as mine, of irregular humours, which detest every sort of bondage and obligation, are not so well adapted to it:

[1] Whom the marriage torch has joined on the desired day. — Catullus, LXIV, 79.

[2] That is, the answers to these questions.

[3] *A le bien façonner et à le bien prendre.*

[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Socrates.*

[5] Man is to man either a god or a wolf. In the edition of 1530 of the *Adages* of Erasmus, *Homo homini lupus* is found on p. 78, and *Homo homini deus* on p. 271. The first sentence occurs also in Plautus, *Asinaria*, II, 4.88, and the other in Symmachus, *Epistle* 10.104.

Et mihi dulce magis resoluto vivere collo.[1]

According to my own purpose I should have shunned marrying Wisdom herself, if she would have had me; but say what we may, custom and the usage of ordinary life carry us along. Most of my acts are guided by example, not by choice. As it was, I did not enter into it exactly by my own invitation: I was led to it by others and carried to it by external opportunities; for not only merely desirable things, but things most ill-favoured and imperfect and to be avoided, may become acceptable from some condition or circumstance, so feeble is man's attitude. And I came certainly more ill-prepared at that time, and more reluctant than I am now, after I have tested it; and, libertine as I am thought to be, I have in fact observed the laws of marriage more strictly than I have either promised or hoped to do. It is no longer the time to kick when a man has allowed himself to be hobbled; one should prudently care for his liberty; but when he has submitted to bondage, he must obey the laws of common duty — or at least strive to do so. They who enter into this bargain only to bear themselves therein with hatred and contempt act unjustly and unsuitably; and this fine precept which I see passing from hand to hand among women, like a sacred oracle, — "Treat thy husband as thy master and beware of him as of a traitor," — which means, bear yourself toward him with a constrained, hostile, and distrustful deference, a war-cry of defiance, — is equally insulting and impossible. I am of too mild a nature for such thorny intentions. To tell the truth, I have not yet attained such perfection of mental ability and agility as to confound reasonableness with injustice, and to turn into ridicule all order and rule that does not please my appetite; because I detest superstition, I do not forthwith fling myself into irreligion. If a man does not always do his duty, he should at least always love it and recognise it. (*c*) It is treachery to marry without wedding. (*b*) Let us continue.

Nostre poëte represente un mariage plein d'accord et de bonne convenance, auquel pourtant il n'y a pas beaucoup

[1] And it is sweeter to me to live with my neck unyoked. — Maximianus (Pseudo-Gallus), I, 61.

de loyauté. A il voulu dire qu'il ne soit pas impossible de se rendre aux efforts de l'amour, et ce neantmoins reserver quelque devoir envers le mariage, et qu'on le peut blesser sans le rompre tout à faict? (*c*) Tel valet ferre la mule au maistre qu'il ne hait pas pourtant. (*b*) La beauté, l'opportunité, la destinée (car la destinée y met aussi la main),—

> fatum est in partibus illis
> Quas sinus abscondit: nam, si tibi sidera cessent,
> Nil faciet longi mensura incognita nervi,[1] —

l'ont attachée à un estranger, non pas si entiere peut estre, qu'il ne luy puisse rester quelque liaison par où elle tient encore à son mary. Ce sont deux desseins qui ont des routes distinguées et non confondues. Une femme se peut rendre à tel personnage, que nullement elle ne voudroit avoir espousé; je ne dy pas pour les conditions de la fortune, mais pour celles mesmes de la personne. Peu de gens ont espousé des amies qui ne s'en soyent repentis. (*c*) Et jusques en l'autre monde, quel mauvais mesnage a faict Juppiter avec sa femme qu'il avoit premierement pratiquée et jouie par amourettes! C'est ce qu'on dict: Chier dans le panier pour apres le mettre sur sa teste.

(*b*) J'ay vu de mon temps, en quelque bon lieu, guerir honteusement et deshonnestement l'amour par le mariage: les considerations sont trop autres. Nous aimons, sans nous empescher, deux choses diverses et qui se contrarient. Isocrates disoit que la ville d'Athenes plaisoit, à la mode que font les dames qu'on sert par amour: chacun aimoit à s'y venir promener et y passer son temps; nul ne l'aymoit pour l'espouser, c'est à dire pour s'y habituer et domicilier.[2] J'ay avec despit veu des maris haïr leurs femmes de ce seulement qu'ils leur font tort: aumoins ne les faut il pas moins aymer de nostre faute; par repentance et compassion au moins, elles nous en devroyent estre plus cheres. Ce sont fins differentes et pourtant compatibles, dict il, en quelque façon. Le mariage a pour sa part l'utilité, la justice, l'honneur, et la constance: un plaisir plat, mais plus universel. L'amour se fonde au seul plaisir, et l'a de vray plus chatouillant, plus vif et plus aigu; un plaisir attizé par la difficulté; il y faut

[1] Juvenal, IX, 32. [2] See Ælianus, *Varia Historia*, XII, 52.

de la piqueure et de la cuison. Ce n'est plus amour s'il est sans fleches et sans feu. La liberalité des dames est trop profuse au mariage et esmousse la poincte de l'affection et du desir. (*c*) Pour fuir à cet inconveniant voies la peine qu'y prennent en leurs loix Lycurgus [1] et Platon.

(*b*) Les femmes n'ont pas tort du tout quand elles refusent les reigles de vie qui sont introduites au monde, d'autant que ce sont les hommes qui les ont faictes sans elles. Il y a naturellement de la brigue et riotte entre elles et nous; le plus estroit consentement que nous ayons avec elles, encores est-il tumultuaire et tempesteux. A l'advis de nostre autheur, nous les traictons inconsideréement en cecy: apres que nous avons cogneu qu'elles sont, sans comparaison, plus capables et ardentes aux effects de l'amour que nous, et que ce prestre ancien l'a ainsi tesmoigné, qui avoit esté tantost homme, tantost femme, —

Venus huic erat utraque nota; [2]

et, en outre, que nous avons apris de leur propre bouche la preuve qu'en firent autrefois en divers siecles un Empereur et une Emperiere [3] de Romme, maistres ouvriers et fameux en cette besongne (luy despucela bien en une nuit dix vierges Sarmates, ses captives; mais elle fournit reelement en une nuit à vint et cinq entreprinses, changeant de compaignie selon son besoing et son goust, —

adhuc ardens rigidæ tentigine vulvæ,
Et lassata viris, nondum satiata, recessit); [4]

et que, sur le different advenu à Cateloigne entre une femme se plaignant des efforts trop assiduels de son mary, non tant, à mon advis, qu'elle en fut incommodée (car je ne crois les miracles qu'en foy), comme pour retrancher soubs ce pretexte et brider, en cela mesme qui est l'action fondamentale du mariage, l'authorité des maris envers leurs femmes, et pour montrer que leurs hergnes et leur malignité passe outre la couche nuptiale et foule aus pieds les graces et douceurs mesmes de Venus; à laquelle plainte le mary respondoit,

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*.
[2] Ovid, *Metam.*, III, 323. The priest was Tiresias.
[3] Proculus and Messalina. [4] Juvenal, VI, 128.

homme vrayement brutal et desnaturé, qu'aux jours mesme de jeusne il ne s'en sçauroit passer à moins de dix, intervint ce notable arrest de la Royne d'Aragon, par lequel, apres meure deliberation de conseil, cette bonne Royne, pour donner reigle et exemple à tout temps de la moderation et modestie requise en un juste mariage, ordonna pour bornes legitimes et necessaires le nombre de six par jour; relâchant et quitant beaucoup de besoing et desir de son sexe, pour establir, disoit elle, une forme aysée et par consequent permanante et immuable;[1] en quoy s'escrient les docteurs: quel doit estre l'appetit et la concupiscence feminine, puisque leur raison, leur reformation et leur vertu se taille à ce pris, (*c*) considerans le divers jugement de nos appetits, et que Solon, chef de l'eschole juridique, ne taxe qu'à trois fois par mois, pour ne faillir point, cette hantise conjugale.[2] (*b*) Apres avoir creu et presché cela, nous sommes allez leur donner la continence peculierement en partage, et sur peines dernieres et extremes.

Il n'est passion plus pressante que cette cy, à laquelle nous voulons qu'elles resistent seules, non simplement comme à un vice de sa mesure, mais comme à l'abomination et execration, plus qu'à l'irreligion et au parricide; et nous nous y rendons cependant sans coulpe et reproche. Ceux mesme d'entre nous qui ont essayé d'en venir à bout ont assez avoué quelle difficulté ou plustost impossibilité il y avoit, usant de remedes materiels, à mater, affoiblir et refroidir le corps. Nous, au contraire, les voulons saines, vigoreuses, en bon point, bien nourries, et chastes ensemble, c'est à dire et chaudes et froides: car le mariage, que nous disons avoir charge de les empescher de bruler, leur apporte peu de rafrechissement, selon nos meurs. Si elles en prennent un à qui la vigueur de l'aage boult encores, il faira gloire de l'espandre ailleurs;

> Sit tandem pudor, aut eamus in jus:
> Multis mentula millibus redempta,
> Non est hæc tua, Basse; vendidisti.[3]

[1] See Nicolas Bohier, *Decisiones Burdegalenses* (1567), Quæst. 316.
[2] See Plutarch, *Of Love*.
[3] Martial, XII, 99.10, 7, 11.

(*c*) Le philosophe Polemon fut justement appelé en justice par sa femme de ce qu'il alloit semant en un champ sterile le fruit deu au champ genital.[1] (*b*) Si c'est de ces autres cassez, les voyla, en plain mariage, de pire condition que vierges et vefves. Nous les tenons pour biens fournies, parce que elles ont un homme aupres, comme les Romains tindrent pour violée Clodia Læta, vestale, que Caligula[2] avoit approchée, encores qu'il fut averé qu'il ne l'avoit qu'approchée; mais, au rebours, on recharge par la leur necessité, d'autant que l'atouchement et la compaignie de quelque masle que ce soit esveille leur chaleur, qui demeureroit plus quiete en la solitude. Et, à cette fin, comme il est vray-semblable, de rendre par cette circonstance et consideration leur chasteté plus meritoire, Boleslaus et Kinge, sa femme, Roys de Poulongne, la vouerent d'un commun accord, couchez ensemble le jour mesme de leurs nopces, et la maintindrent à la barbe des commoditez maritales.[3]

Nous les dressons dès l'enfance aux entremises de l'amour: leur grace, leur atiffeure, leur science, leur parole, toute leur instruction ne regarde qu'à ce but. Leurs gouvernantes ne leur impriment autre chose que le visage de l'amour, ne fut qu'en le leur representant continuellement pour les en desgouster. Ma fille (c'est tout ce que j'ay d'enfans) est en l'aage auquel les loix excusent les plus eschauffées de se marier; elle est d'une complexion tardive, mince et molle, et a esté par sa mere eslevée de mesme d'une forme retirée et particuliere: si qu'elle ne commence encore qu'à se desniaiser de la nayfveté de l'enfance. Elle lisoit un livre françois devant moy. Le mot de fouteau s'y rencontra, nom d'un arbre cogneu: la femme qu'ell' a pour sa conduite, l'arresta tout court un peu rudement, et la fit passer par dessus ce mauvais pas. Je la laissay faire pour ne troubler leurs reigles, car je ne m'empesche aucunement de ce gouvernement: la police feminine a un trein mysterieux, il faut le leur quitter. Mais, si je ne me trompe, le commerce de vingt laquays n'eust sçeu imprimer en sa fantasie, de six moys, l'intelligence et usage et toutes les consequences du

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Polemo*.
[2] Caracalla. See Dion Cassius, *Life of Caracalla*.
[3] See H. Fulstin, *History of the Kings of Poland*.

son de ces syllabes scelerées, comme fit cette bonne vieille par sa reprimande et interdiction.

Motus doceri gaudet Ionicos
Matura virgo, et frangitur artubus
Jam nunc, et incestos amores
De tenero meditatur ungui.[1]

Qu'elles se dispensent un peu de la ceremonie, qu'elles entrent en liberté de discours, nous ne sommes qu'enfans au pris d'elles en cette science. Oyez leur representer nos poursuittes et nos entretiens, elles vous font bien cognoistre que nous ne leur apportons rien qu'elles n'ayent sçeu et digeré sans nous. (*c*) Seroit ce ce que dict Platon,[2] qu'elles aïent este garçons desbauchez autresfois? (*b*) Mon oreille se rencontra un jour en lieu où elle pouvoit desrober aucun des discours faicts entre elles sans soubçon: que ne puis-je le dire? Nostre Dame! (fis-je) allons à cette heure estudier des frases d'Amadis et des registres de Boccace et de l'Aretin pour faire les habiles; nous employons vrayement bien nostre temps! Il n'est ny parole, ny exemple, ny démarche qu'elles ne sçachent mieux que nos livres: c'est une discipline qui naist dans leurs veines, —

Et mentem Venus ipsa dedit,[3] —

que ces bons maistres d'escole, nature, jeunesse, et santé, leur soufflent continuellement dans l'ame; elles n'ont que faire de l'apprendre, elles l'engendrent.

Nec tantum niveo gavisa est ulla columbo
Compar, vel si quid dicitur improbius,
Oscula mordenti semper decerpere rostro,
Quantum præcipue multivola est mulier.[4]

Qui n'eut tenu un peu en bride cette naturelle violence de leur desir par la crainte et honneur dequoy on les a pourveues, nous estions diffamez. Tout le mouvement du monde se resoult et rend à cet accoupplage: c'est une matiere infuse par tout, c'est un centre où toutes choses regardent. On void encore des ordonnances de la vieille et sage Romme

[1] Horace, *Odes*, III, 6.21.
[2] In the *Timæus*.
[3] Virgil, *Georgics*, III, 267.
[4] Catullus, LXVI, 125.

faictes pour le service de l'amour, et les preceptes de Socrates à instruire les courtisanes;

Nec non libelli Stoici inter sericos
Jacere pulvillos amant.[1]

Zenon, parmy ses loix, regloit aussi les escarquillemens et les secousses du depucelage.[2] (*c*) De quel sens estoit le livre du philosophe Strato, de la conjunction charnelle? et de quoi traictoit Theophraste en ceus qu'il intitula, l'un l'amoureux, l'autre de l'amour? De quoi Aristippus au sien des antienes delices? Que veulent pretendre les descriptions si estendues et vives en Platon, des amours de son temps plus hardies? Et le livre de l'amoureux de Demetrius Phalereus; et Clinias, ou l'amoureux forcé, de Heraclides Ponticus? Et d'Antisthenes celuy de faire les enfants ou des nopces, et l'autre du maistre ou de l'amant? et d'Aristo celuy des exercices amoureus? de Cleanthes, un de l'amour, l'autre de l'art d'aimer? Les dialogues amoureux de Sphærus? et la fable de Juppiter et Juno de Chrysippus, eshontée au dela de toute souffrance, et ses cinquante epistres si lascives?[3] Car il faut laisser à part les escris des philosophes qui ont suivi la secte Epicuriene. (*b*) Cinquante deitez estoient, au temps passé, asservies à cet office; et s'est trouvé nation où, pour endormir la concupiscence de ceux qui venoient à la devotion, on tenoit aux Eglises des garses et des garsons à jouyr, et estoit acte de ceremonie de s'en servir avant venir à l'office. (*c*) *Nimirum propter continentiam incontinentia necessaria est; incendium ignibus extinguitur.*[4]

(*b*) En la plus part du monde, cette partie de nostre corps estoit deifiée. En mesme province, les uns se l'escorchoient pour en offrir et consacrer un lopin, les autres offroient et consacroient leur semence. En une autre, les eunes hommes se le perçoient publiquement et ouvroient en divers lieux entre chair et cuir, et traversoient par ces ouvertures des brochettes, les plus longues et grosses qu'ils pouvoient souffrir; et de ces brochettes faisoient apres du feu

[1] Horace, *Epodes*, VIII, 15. [2] See Plutarch, *Table-Talk*.

[3] All these illustrations are taken from the Lives, by Diogenes Laertius, of the different philosophers.

[4] Source unknown.

pour offrande à leurs dieux, estimez peu vigoureux et peu chastes s'ils venoient à s'estonner par la force de cette cruelle douleur. Ailleurs, le plus sacré magistrat estoit reveré et reconneu par ces parties là, et en plusieurs ceremonies l'effigie en estoit portée en pompe à l'honneur de diverses divinitez. Les dames Egyptiennes, en la feste des Bacchanales, en portoient au col un de bois, exquisement formé, grand et pesant, chacune selon sa force, outre ce que la statue de leur dieu en representoit, qui surpassoit en mesure le reste du corps. Les femmes mariées, icy pres, en forgent de leur couvrechef une figure sur leur front pour se glorifier de la jouyssance qu'elles en ont; et, venant à estre vefves, le couchent en arriere et ensevelissent soubs leur coiffure. Les plus sages matrones, à Romme, estoient honnorées d'offrir des fleurs et des couronnes au Dieu Priapus; et sur ses parties moins honnestes faisoit-on soir les vierges au temps de leurs nopces.[1] Encore ne sçay-je si j'ay veu en mes jours quelque air de pareille devotion. Que vouloit dire cette ridicule piece de la chaussure de nos peres, qui se voit encore en nos Souysses? A quoy faire la montre que nous faisons à cette heure de nos pieces en forme, soubs nos gregues, et souvent, qui pis est, outre leur grandeur naturelle, par fauceté et imposture? (*c*) Il me prent envie de croire que cette sorte de vestement fut inventée aux meillurs et plus consciantieux siecles pour ne piper le monde, pour que chacun rendist en publicq egalamment compte de son faict. Les nations plus simples l'ont encores aucunement rapportant au vrai. Lors on instruisoit la science de l'ouvrier, comme il se faict de la mesure du bras ou du pied.

(*b*) Ce bon homme, qui en ma jeunesse chastra tant de belles et antiques statues en sa grande ville pour ne corrompre la veue, (*c*) suivant l'advis de cet autre antien bon homme,

Flagitii principium est nudare inter cives corpora,[2]

(*b*) se devoit adviser, comme aux misteres de la Bonne Deesse toute apparence masculine en estoit forclose,[3] que ce

[1] Cf. St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, VII, 24, and VI, 9.
[2] Ennius, in Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, IV, 33.
[3] Cf. Seneca, *Epistle* 97.

n'estoit rien avancer, s'il ne faisoit encore chastrer et chevaux et asnes, et nature en fin.

Omne adeo genus in terris hominumque ferarumque,
Et genus æquoreum, pecudes, pictæque volucres,
In furias ignemque ruunt.[1]

(*c*) Les dieux, dit Platon, nous ont fourni d'un membre inobedient et tyrannique, qui, comme un animal furieux, entreprend, par la violence de son appetit, sousmettre tout à soi. De mesme aux femmes, un animal glouton et avide, auquel si on refuse alimans en sa saison, il forcene, impatient de delai, et, soufflant sa rage en leurs corps, empesche les conduits, arrete la respiration, causant mille sortes de maux, jusques à ce qu'aïant humé le fruit de la soif commune, il en aie largement arrose et ensemance le fond de leur matrice.[2] (*b*) Et se devoit aviser aussi mon legislateur, qu'à l'avanture est-ce un plus chaste et fructueux usage de leur faire de bonne heure connoistre le vif que de le leur laisser deviner selon la liberté et chaleur de leur fantasie. Au lieu des parties vrayes, elles en substituent, par desir et par esperance, d'autres extravagantes au triple. (*c*) Et tel de ma connoissance s'est perdu pour avoir faict la descouverte des siennes en lieu ou il n'estoit encores au propre de les mettre en possession de leur plus serieux usage.

(*b*) Quel dommage ne font ces enormes pourtraicts que les enfans vont semant aux passages et escalliers des maisons Royalles? De là leur vient un cruel mespris de nostre portée naturelle. (*c*) Que sçait-on si Platon, ordonant, apres d'autres republiques bien instituées, que les hommes, femmes, vieux, jeunes, se presentent nuds à la veue les uns des autres en ses gymnastiques, n'a pas regarde à cela?[3] (*b*) Les Indiennes, qui voyent les hommes à crud, ont aumoins refroidy le sens de la veue. (*c*) Et quoi que dient les femmes de ce grand royaume du Pegu, qui, audessous de la ceinture n'ont à se couvrir qu'un drap fandu par le devant et si estroit que, quelque ceremonieuse decence qu'elles y cherchent, à chaque pas on les voit toutes, que c'est une invention trouvée aus fins d'attirer les hommes à elles et les retirer

[1] Virgil, *Georgics*, III, 242.
[2] See Plato, *Timæus*.
[3] See Idem, *Republic*, book V.

des masles à quoi cette nation est du tout abandonée, il se pourroit dire qu'elles y perdent plus qu'elles n'advancent et qu une faim entiere est plus aspre que celle qu'on a ressasiée au moins par les yeus. (*b*) Aussi disoit Livia qu'à une femme de bien un homme nud n'est non plus qu'une image.[1] (*c*) Les Lacedemonienes, plus vierges, femmes, que ne sont nos filles, voioient tous les jours les jeunes hommes de leur ville despouillez en leurs exercices, peu exactes elles mesmes à couvrir leurs cuisses en marchant, s'estimans, comme dict Platon, asses couvertes de leur vertu sans vertugade.[2] Mais ceux là des quels tesmouigne S. Augustin,[3] ont donne un merveilleux effort de tentation à la nudité qui ont mis en doute si les femmes au jugement universel resusciteront en leur sexe, et non plus tost au nostre, pour ne nous tenter encore en ce sainct estat.

(*b*) On les leurre, en somme, et acharne par tous moyens; nous eschauffons et incitons leur imagination sans cesse, et puis nous crions au ventre. Confessons le vray: il n'en est guere d'entre nous qui ne craingne plus la honte qui luy vient des vices de sa femme que des siens; qui ne se soigne plus (charité esmerveillable) de la conscience de sa bonne espouse que de la sienne propre; qui n'aymast mieux estre voleur et sacrilege, et que sa femme fust meurtriere et heretique, que si elle n'estoit plus chaste que son mary.

Et elles offriront volontiers d'aller au palais querir du gain, et à la guerre de la reputation, plustost que d'avoir, au milieu de l'oisiveté et des delices, à faire une si difficile garde. Voyent-elles pas qu'il n'est ny marchant, ny procureur, ny soldat, qui ne quitte sa besoigne pour courre à cette autre, et le crocheteur, et le savetier, tous harassez et hallebrenez qu'ils sont de travail et de faim?

> Nam tu, quæ tenuit dives Achæmenes,
> Aut pinguis Phrygiæ Mygdonias opes,
> Permutare velis crine Licimniæ,
> Plenas aut Arabum domos,
>
> Dum fragrantia detorquet ad oscula
> Cervicem, aut facili sævitia negat,

[1] See Dion Cassius, *Life of Tiberius*. [2] See the *Republic*, book V.
[3] In *De Civ. Dei*, XXII, 17.

Quæ poscente magis gaudeat eripi,
Interdum rapere occupet? [1]

(*c*) Inique estimation de vices! Nous et elles sommes capables de mille corruptions plus dommageables et desnaturées que n'est la lasciveté; mais nous faisons et poisons les vices non selon nature, mais selon nostre interest, par ou ils prenent tant de formes inegales. L'aspreté de nos decretz rend l'application des femmes à ce vice plus aspre et vicieuse que ne porte sa condition, et l'engage à des suites pires que n'est leur cause. (*b*) Je ne sçay si les exploicts de Cæsar et d'Alexandre surpassent en rudesse la resolution d'une belle jeune femme nourrie à nostre façon, à la lumiere et commerce du monde, battue de tant d'exemples contraires, se maintenant entiere au milieu de mille continuelles et fortes poursuittes. Il n'y a poinct de faire plus espineux qu'est ce non faire, ny plus actif. Je treuve plus aisé de porter une cuirasse toute sa vie qu'un pucelage; et est le vœu de la virginité le plus noble de tous les vœus, comme estant le plus aspre. (*c*) *Diaboli virtus in lumbis est*, dict S. Jerôme.[2]

(*b*) Certes, le plus ardu et le plus vigoureux des humains devoirs, nous l'avons resigné aux dames, et leur en quittons la gloire. Cela leur doit servir d'un singulier esguillon à s'y opiniastrer; c'est une belle matiere à nous braver et à fouler aux pieds cette vaine præeminence de valeur et de vertu que nous pretendons sur elles. Elles trouveront, si elles s'en prennent garde, qu'elles en seront non seulement tresestimées, mais aussi plus aymées. Un galant homme n'abandonne point sa poursuitte pour estre refusé, pourveu que ce soit un refus de chasteté, non de chois. Nous avons beau jurer et menasser, et nous plaindre: nous mentons, nous les en aymons mieux: il n'est point de pareil leurre que la sagesse non rude et renfroignée. C'est stupidité et lâcheté de s'opiniatrer contre la haine et le mespris; mais contre une resolution vertueuse et constante, meslée d'une volonté recognoissante, c'est l'exercice d'une ame noble et genereuse. Elles peuvent reconnoistre nos services jusques à certaine mesure, et nous faire sentir honnestement qu'elles ne nous desdaignent pas.

[1] Horace, *Odes*, II, 12.21. [2] *Contra Jovinianum*, II.

(*c*) Car cette loi qui leur commande de nous abominer par ce que nous les adorons, et nous haïr de ce que nous les aimons, elle est certes cruelle, ne fut que de sa difficulté. Pourquoy n'orront elles nos offres et nos demandes autant qu'elles se contiennent sous le devoir de la modestie? Que va l'on divinant qu'elles sonnent au dedans quelque sens plus libre? Une Roine de nostre temps disoit ingenieusement que de refuser ces abbors, c'estoit tesmoignage de foiblesse et accusation de sa propre facilité, et qu'une dame non tentée ne se pouvoit vanter de sa chasteté. (*b*) Les limites de l'honneur ne sont pas retranchez du tout si court: il a dequoy se relascher, il peut se dispenser aucunement sans se forfaire. Au bout de sa frontiere il y a quelque estendue libre, indifferente et neutre. Qui l'a peu chasser et acculer à force, jusques dans son coin et son fort, c'est un mal habile homme s'il n'est satisfaict de sa fortune. Le pris de la victoire se considere par la difficulté. Voulez vous sçavoir quelle impression a faict en son cœur vostre servitude et vostre merite? mesurez le à ses meurs. Telle peut donner plus qui ne donne pas tant. L'obligation du bien-faict se rapporte entierement à la volonté de celuy qui donne. Les autres circonstances qui tombent au bien faire, sont muettes, mortes et casuelles. Ce peu luy couste plus à donner, qu'à sa compaigne son tout. Si en quelque chose la rareté sert d'estimation, ce doit estre en cecy; ne regardez pas combien peu c'est, mais combien peu l'ont. La valeur de la monnoye se change selon le coin et la merque du lieu.

Quoy que le despit et indiscretion d'aucuns leur puisse faire dire sur l'excez de leur mescontentement, tousjours la vertu et la verité regaigne son avantage. J'en ay veu, desquelles la reputation a esté long temps interessée par injure, s'estre remises en l'approbation universelle des hommes par leur seule constance, sans soing et sans artifice: chacun se repent et se desment de ce qu'il en a creu; de filles un peu suspectes, elles tiennent le premier rang entre les dames de bien et d'honneur. Quelqu'un disoit à Platon: "Tout le monde mesdit de vous." — "Laissez les dire," fit-il, "je vivray de façon que je leur feray changer de langage."[1] Outre la crainte de Dieu et le pris d'une gloire si rare qui les

[1] See the Monks Antonius and Maximus, *Sermo* 54.

doibt inciter à se conserver, la corruption de ce siecle les y force; et, si j'estois en leur place, il n'est rien que je ne fisse plustost que de commettre ma reputation en mains si dangereuses. De mon temps, le plaisir d'en compter (plaisir qui ne doit guere en douceur à celuy mesme de l'effect) n'estoit permis qu'à ceux qui avoient quelque amy fidelle et unique; à present les entretiens ordinaires des assemblées et des tables, ce sont les vanteries des faveurs receues et liberalité secrette des dames. Vrayement c'est trop d'abjection et de bassesse de cœur de laisser ainsi fierement persecuter, pestrir et fourrager ces tendres graces à des personnes ingrates, indiscrettes et si volages. Cette nostre exasperation immoderée et illegitime contre ce vice naist de la plus vaine et tempestueuse maladie qui afflige les ames humaines, qui est la jalousie.

Quis vetat apposito lumen de lumine sumi? [1]
Dent licet assidue, nil tamen inde perit.[2]

Celle-la et l'envie, sa sœur, me semblent des plus ineptes de la trouppe. De cette-cy je n'en puis guere parler: cette passion, qu'on peinct si forte et si puissante, n'a de sa grace aucune addresse en moy. Quand à l'autre, je la cognois, aumoins de veue. Les bestes en ont ressentiment: le pasteur Crastis estant tombé en l'amour d'une chevre, son bouc, ainsi qu'il dormoit, luy vint par jalousie choquer la teste de la sienne et la luy escraza.[3] Nous avons monté l'excez de cette fievre à l'exemple d'aucunes nations barbares; les mieux disciplinées en ont esté touchées, c'est raison, mais non pas transportées:

Ense maritali nemo confossus adulter
Purpureo Stygias sanguine tinxit aquas.[4]

Lucullus, Cæsar, Pompeius, Antonius, Caton et d'autres braves hommes furent cocus, et le sceurent sans en exciter tumulte.[5] Il n'y eust, en ce temps là, qu'un sot de Lepidus qui en mourut d'angoisse.[6]

[1] Ovid, *De Arte Amandi*, III, 93. [2] *Priapea*, III, 2.
[3] See Ælianus, *Historia Animalium*, VI, 42.
[4] Jean Second, *Elegies*, I, 7.71.
[5] For all these, see their respective Lives by Plutarch.
[6] See Plutarch, *Life of Pompey*.

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Ah! tum te miserum malique fati,
Quem attractis pedibus, patente porta,
Percurrent raphanique mugilesque.[1]

Et le dieu de nostre poete, quand il surprint avec sa femme l'un de ses compaignons, se contenta de leur en faire honte;

atque aliquis de diis non tristibus optat
Sic fieri turpis; [2]

et ne laisse pourtant pas de s'eschauffer des douces caresses qu'elle luy offre, se plaignant qu'elle soit pour cela entrée en deffiance de son affection:

Quid causas petis ex alto? fiducia cessit
Quo tibi, diva, mei? [3]

Voire elle luy faict requeste pour un sien bastard, —

Arma rogo genitrix nato,[4] —

qui luy est liberalement accordée; et parle Vulcan d'Æneas avec honneur:

Arma acri facienda viro; [5]

d'une humanité à la verité plus qu'humaine! Et cet excez de bonté, je consens qu'on le quitte aux dieux:

Nec divis homines componier æquum est.[6]

Quant à la confusion des enfans, (*c*) outre ce que les plus graves legislaturs l'ordonnent et l'affectent en leurs republiques, (*b*) elle ne touche pas les femmes, ou cette passion est, je ne sçay comment, encore mieux en son siege;

Sæpe etiam Iuno, maxima cœlicolum,
Conjugis in culpa flagravit quotidiana.[7]

Lors que la jalousie saisit ces pauvres ames foibles et sans resistance, c'est pitié comme elle les tirasse et tyrannise cruellement: elle s'y insinue sous tiltre d'amitié; mais, depuis qu'elle les possede, les mesmes causes qui servoient de fondement à la bienvueillance servent de fondement de hayne capitale. (*c*) C'est des maladies d'esprit celle à qui plus de

[1] Catullus, XV, 17.
[2] Ovid, *Metam.*, IV, 187.
[3] Virgil, *Æneid*, VIII, 395.
[4] *Ibid.*, 383.
[5] *Ibid.*, 441.
[6] Catullus, LXVIII, 141.
[7] *Ibid.*, 138.

choses servent d'aliment, et moins de choses de remede. (*b*) La vertu, la santé, le merite, la reputation du mary sont les boutefeus de leur maltalent et de leur rage:

Nullæ sunt inimicitiæ, nisi amoris, acerbæ.[1]

Cette fievre laidit et corrompt tout ce qu'elles ont de bel et de bon d'ailleurs; et d'une femme jalouse, quelque chaste qu'elle soit et mesnagere, il n'est action qui ne sente à l'aigre et à l'importun. C'est une agitation enragée, qui les rejecte à une extremité du tout contraire à sa cause. Il fut bon d'un Octavius à Romme: ayant couché avec Pontia Posthumia, il augmenta son affection par la jouyssance, et poursuyvit à toute instance de l'espouser; ne la pouvant persuader, cet amour extreme le precipita aux effects de la plus cruelle et mortelle inimitié: il la tua.[2] Pareillement, les symptomes ordinaires de cette autre maladie amoureuse, ce sont haynes intestines, monopoles, conjurations, —

notumque furens quid fœmina possit,[3] —

et une rage qui se ronge d'autant plus qu'elle est contraincte de s'excuser du pretexte de bienvueillance.

Or le devoir de chasteté a une grande estendue. Est-ce la volonté que nous voulons qu'elles bident? C'est une piece bien soupple et active; elle a beaucoup de promptitude pour la pouvoir arrester. Comment? si les songes les engagent par fois si avant qu'elles ne s'en puissent desdire. Il n'est pas en elles, ny à l'advanture en la Chasteté mesme, puis qu'elle est femelle, de se deffendre des concupiscences et du desirer. Si leur volonté seule nous interesse, où en sommes nous? Imaginez la grande presse, à qui auroit ce privilege d'estre porté tout empenné, sans yeux et sans langue, sur le poinct de chacune qui l'accepteroit. (*c*) Les femmes Scythes crevoint les yeux a tous leurs esclaves et prisoniers de guerre pour s'en servir plus librement et couvertement.[4]

(*b*) O le furieux advantage que l'opportunité! Qui me demanderoit la premiere partie en l'amour, je responderois

[1] Propertius, II, 8.3.
[2] See Tacitus, *Annals*, XIII, 44 and *History*, IV, 44.
[3] Virgil, *Æneid*, V, 6.
[4] See Herodotus, IV, 2. Montaigne misread the text.

que c'est sçavoir prendre le temps; la seconde de mesme, et encore la tierce: c'est un poinct qui peut tout. J'ay eu faute de fortune souvent, mais par fois aussi d'entreprise: Dieu gard' de mal qui peut encores s'en moquer. Il y faut en ce siecle plus de temerité, laquelle nos jeunes gens excusent sous pretexte de chaleur: mais, si elles y regardoyent de pres, elles trouveroyent qu'elle vient plustost de mespris. Je craignois superstitieusement d'offenser, et respecte volontiers ce que j'ayme. Outre ce qu'en cette marchandise, qui en oste la reverence en efface le lustre. J'ayme qu'on y face un peu l'enfant, le craintif et le serviteur. Si ce n'est du tout en cecy, j'ay d'ailleurs quelques airs de la sotte honte dequoy parle Plutarque,[1] et en a esté le cours de ma vie blessé et taché diversement; qualité bien malavenante à ma forme universelle: qu'est-il de nous aussi que sedition et discrepance? J'ay les yeux tendres à soustenir un refus, comme à refuser; et me poise tant de poiser à autruy que, és occasions où le devoir me force d'essayer la volonté de quelqu'un en chose doubteuse et qui luy couste, je le fais maigrement et envis. (*c*) Mais si c'est pour mon particulier (quoi que die veritablement Homere qu'à un indigent c'est une sotte vertu que la honte [2]) j'y commets ordinerement un tiers qui rougisse en ma place, (*b*) et esconduis ceux qui m'emploient de pareille difficulté, si qu'il m'est advenu par fois d'avoir la volonté de nier, que je n'en avois pas la force.

C'est donc folie d'essayer à brider aux femmes un desir qui leur est si cuisant et si naturel. Et, quand je les oy se vanter d'avoir leur volonté si vierge et si froide, je me moque d'elles: elles se reculent trop arriere. Si c'est une vieille esdentée et decrepite, ou une jeune seche et pulmonique, s'il n'est du tout croyable, aumoins elles ont apparence de le dire. Mais celles qui se meuvent et qui respirent encores, elles en empirent leur marché, d'autant que les excuses inconsiderées servent d'accusation. Comme un gentil'homme de mes voisins, qu'on soubçonnoit d'impuissance, —

> Languidior tenera cui pendens sicula beta
> Nunquam se mediam sustulit ad tunicam,[3] —

[1] In the essay, *Of False Shame*
[2] See the *Odyssey*, XVII, 347.
[3] Catullus, LXVII, 21.

trois ou quatre jours apres ses nopces, alla jurer tout hardiment, pour se justifier, qu'il avoit faict vingt postes la nuict precedente, dequoy on s'est servi depuis à le convaincre de pure ignorance et à le desmarier. Outre que ce n'est rien dire qui vaille, car il n'y a ny continence ny vertu, s'il n'y a de l'effort au contraire. Il est vray, faut il dire, mais je ne suis pas preste à me rendre. Les saincts mesmes parlent ainsi. S'entant de celles qui se vantent en bon escient de leur froideur et insensibilité et qui veulent en estre creües (*c*) d'un visage serieux; (*b*) car, quand c'est d'un visage affeté, où les yeux dementent leurs parolles, et du jargon de leur profession qui porte coup à contrepoil, je le trouve bon. Je suis fort serviteur de la nayfveté et de la liberté; mais il n'y a remede: si elle n'est du tout niaise ou enfantine, elle est inepte aux dames, et messeante en ce commerce; elle gauchit incontinent sur l'impudence. Leurs desguisements et leurs figures ne trompent que les sots. Le mentir y est en siege d'honneur: c'est un destour qui nous conduit à la verité par une fauce porte. Si nous ne pouvons contenir leur imagination, que voulons nous d'elles? Les effects? il en est assez qui eschappent à toute communication estrangere, par lesquels la chasteté peut estre corrompue;

Illud sæpe facit quod sine teste facit;[1]

et ceux que nous craignons le moins sont à l'avanture les plus à craindre: leurs pechez muets sont les pires:

Offendor mœcha simpliciore minus.[2]

(*c*) Il est des effaicts qui peuvent perdre sans impudicité leur pudicité et, qui plus est, sans leur sceu: *obstetrix, virginis cujusdam integritatem manu velut explorans, sive malevolentia, sive inscitia, sive casu, dum inspicit, perdidit.*[3] Telle a esdiré sa virginite pour l'avoir cherchée; telle, s'en esbatant, l'a tuée. (*b*) Nous ne sçaurions leur circonscrire precisement les actions que nous leur deffendons. Il faut concevoir nostre loy soubs parolles generalles et incertaines. L'idée mesme que nous forgeons à leur chasteté est ridicule; car, entre les extremes patrons que j'en aye, c'est Fatua,

[1] Martial, VII, 62.6.
[2] Idem, VI, 7.6.
[3] St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, I, 18.

femme de Faunus, qui ne se laissa voir oncques puis ses nopces à masle quelconque,[1] et la femme de Hieron, qui ne sentoit pas son mary punais, estimant que ce fut une commune qualité à tous hommes.[2] Il faut qu'elles deviennent insensibles et invisibles pour nous satisfaire.

Or confessons que le neud du jugement de ce devoir gist principallement en la volonté.[3] Il y a eu des maris qui ont souffert cet accident, non seulement sans reproche et offence envers leurs femmes, mais avec singuliere obligation et recommandation de leur vertu. Telle, qui aymoit mieux son honneur que sa vie, l'a prostitué à l'appetit forcené d'un mortel ennemy pour sauver la vie à son mary, et a faict pour luy ce qu'elle n'eust aucunement faict pour soy. Ce n'est pas icy le lieu d'estendre ces exemples: ils sont trop hauts et trop riches pour estre representez en ce lustre, gardons les à un plus noble siege. (*c*) Mais, pour des exemples de lustre plus vulguere, est-il pas tous les jours des femmes qui, pour la seule utilité de leurs maris, se prestent, et par leur expresse ordonance et entremise? Et antienement Phaulius l'Argien offrit la siene au Roy Philippus par ambition;[4] tout ainsi que par civilité ce Galba, qui avoit donné à souper à Mecenas, voiant que sa femme et luy commençoint à comploter par œuillades et signes, se laissa couler sur son coussin, represantant un homme aggravé de sommeil, pour faire espaule à leur intelligance; ce qu'il advoua d'assez bonne grace; car, sur ce point, un valet aiant pris la hardiesse de porter la main sur les vases qui estoint sur la table, il lui cria: "Vois tu pas, coquin, que je ne dors que pour Mecenas?"[5] (*b*) Telle a les meurs desbordées, qui a la volonté plus reformée que n'a cet' autre qui se conduit soubs une apparence reiglée. Comme nous en voyons qui se plaignent d'avoir esté vouées à chasteté avant l'aage de cognoissance, j'en ay veu aussi se plaindre veritablement d'avoir esté vouées à la desbauche avant l'aage de cognoissance; le vice des parens en peut estre cause, ou la force du besoing, qui est un rude conseillier. Aus Indes orientales, la chasteté y estant

[1] See Lactantius, *De Divina Institutione*, I, 22.
[2] See Plutarch, *How one can derive benefit from one's enemies.*
[3] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, I, 18.
[4] See Plutarch, *Of Love.*
[5] See *Ibid.*

en singuliere recommandation, l'usage pourtant souffroit qu'une femme mariée se peut abandonner à qui luy presentoit un elephant; et cela avec quelque gloire d'avoir esté estimée à si haut pris.[1]

(*c*) Phædon le philosofe, homme de maison, apres la prinse de son païs d'Elide, fit mestier de prostituer, autant qu'elle dura, la beauté de sa jeunesse a qui en volut à pris d'argent, pour en vivre.[2] Et Solon fut le premier en la Græce, dict on, qui, par ses loix, donna liberté aux femmes aux despans de leur pudicité de pourvoir au besouin de leur vie,[3] coustume que Herodote dict avoir esté receue avant luy en plusieurs polices.[4] (*b*) Et puis quel fruit de cette penible solicitude! car, quelque justice qu'il y ait en cette passion, encores faudroit il voir si elle nous charrie utilement. Est-il quelqu'un qui les pense boucler par son industrie?

> Pone seram, cohibe; sed quis custodiet ipsos
> Custodes? Cauta est, et ab illis incipit uxor.[5]

Quelle commodité ne leur est suffisante en un siecle si sçavant?

La curiosité est vicieuse par tout, mais elle est pernicieuse icy. C'est folie de vouloir s'esclaircir d'un mal auquel il n'y a point de medecine qui ne l'empire et le rengrege; duquel la honte s'augmente et se publie principalement par la jalousie; duquel la vengeance blesse plus nos enfants qu'elle ne nous guerit? Vous assechez et mourez à la queste d'une si obscure verification. Combien piteusement y sont arrivez ceux de mon temps qui en sont venus à bout! Si l'advertisseur n'y presente quand et quand le remede et son secours, c'est un advertissement injurieux et qui merite mieux un coup de poignard que ne faict un dementir. On ne se moque pas moins de celuy qui est en peine d'y pourvoir que de celuy qui l'ignore. Le caractere de la cornardise est indelebile; à qui il est une fois attaché, il l'est tousjours; le chastiement l'exprime plus que la faute. Il faict beau voir arracher de l'ombre et du doubte nos malheurs privés,

[1] Cf. Arrian, VII, 17.
[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Phædo;* Aulus Gellius, II, 18.
[3] See C. Agrippa, *De Incertitudine*, etc., LXIII.
[4] See Herodotus, I, 93, 196. [5] Juvenal, VI, 347.

pour les trompeter en eschaffaux tragiques; et mal'heurs qui ne pinsent que par le rapport. Car bonne femme et bon mariage se dict non de qui l'est, mais duquel on se taist. Il faut estre ingenieux à eviter cette ennuyeuse et inutile cognoissance. Et avoyent les Romains en coustume, revenans de voyage, d'envoyer au devant en la maison faire sçavoir leur arrivée aus femmes, pour ne les surprendre.[1] Et pourtant a introduit certaine nation que le prestre ouvre le pas à l'espousée, le jour des nopces, pour oster au marié le doubte et la curiosité de cercher en ce premier essay si elle vient à luy vierge ou blessée d'un' amour estrangere.[2] Mais le monde en parle. Je sçay cent honnestes hommes coqus, honnestement et peu indecemment. Un galant homme en est pleint, non pas desestimé. Faites que vostre vertu estouffe vostre mal'heur, que les gens de bien en maudissent l'occasion, que celuy qui vous offence tremble seulement à le penser. Et puis, de qui ne parle on en ce sens, depuis le petit jusques au plus grand?

Tot qui legionibus imperitavit,
Et melior quam tu multis fuit, improbe, rebus.[3]

Voys tu qu'on engage en ce reproche tant d'honnestes hommes en ta presence? Pense qu'on ne t'espargne non plus ailleurs. Mais jusques aux dames, elles s'en moqueront. Et dequoy se moquent elles en ce temps plus volontiers que d'un mariage paisible et bien composé? (*c*) Chacun de vous a faict quelqu'un coqu; or nature est toute en pareilles, en compensation et vicissitude. (*b*) La frequence de cet accident en doibt meshuy avoir moderé l'aigreur: le voyla tantost passé en coustume. Miserable passion, qui a cecy encore, d'estre incommunicable;

Fors etiam nostris invidit questibus aures;[4]

car à quel amy osez vous fier vos doleances, qui, s'il ne s'en rit, ne s'en serve d'acheminement et d'instruction pour prendre luy-mesme sa part à la curée?

[1] See Plutarch, *Roman Questions*, IX.

[2] See Gomara, *General History of the Indies*.

[3] Lucretius, III, 1028, 1026. Both lines were changed by Montaigne to suit his purpose.

[4] Catullus, LXIV, 170.

(*c*) Les aigreurs comme les douceurs du mariage se tiennent secretes par les sages. Et, parmi les autres importunes conditions qui se trouvent en iceluy, ceteci, à un homme langagier comme je suis, est des principales: que la coustume rende indecent et nuisible qu'on communique à personne tout ce qu'on en sçait et qu'on en sent. (*b*) De leur donner mesme conseil à elles pour les desgouster de la jalousie, ce seroit temps perdu: leur essence est si confite en soubçon, en vanité et en curiosité, que de les guarir par voye legitime, il ne faut pas l'esperer. Elles s'amendent souvent de cet inconvenient par une forme de santé beaucoup plus à craindre que n'est la maladie mesme. Car, comme il y a des enchantemens qui ne sçavent pas oster le mal, qu'en le rechargeant à un autre, elles rejettent ainsi volontiers cette fievre à leurs maris quand elles la perdent. Toutesfois, à dire vray, je ne sçay si on peut souffrir d'elles pis que la jalousie: c'est la plus dangereuse de leurs conditions, comme de leurs membres la teste. Pittacus disoit que chacun avoit son defaut; que le sien estoit la mauvaise teste de sa femme; hors cela il s'estimeroit de tout poinct heureux.[1] C'est un bien poisant inconvenient, duquel un personnage si juste, si sage, si vaillant sentoit tout l'estat de sa vie alteré: que devons nous faire, nous autres hommenets?

(*c*) Le senat de Marseille eut raison d'accorder la requeste à celuy qui demandoit permission de se tuer pour s'exempter de la tempeste de sa femme;[2] car c'est un mal qu ne s'emporte jamais qu'en emportant la piece, et qui n'a autre composition qui vaille que la fuite ou la souffrance, quoi que toutes les dues tres difficiles. (*b*) Celuy là s'y entendoit,[3] ce me semble, qui dict qu'un bon mariage se dressoit d'une femme aveugle avec un mary sourd.

Regardons aussi que cette grande et violente aspreté d'obligation que nous leur enjoignons ne produise deux effects contraires à nostre fin: asçavoir qu'elle esguise les poursuyvans et face les femmes plus faciles à se rendre; car, quand au premier point, montant le pris de la place, nous

[1] See Plutarch, *Of the tranquillity of the mind.*

[2] See Castiglione, *The Courtier* III, 24; Valerius Maximus, II, 6.7. Cf. Book II, chap. 3 (Vol. II, p. 79).

[3] King Alfonso V of Aragon. See the *Apothegms* of Erasmus.

montons le pris et le desir de la conqueste. Seroit-ce pas Venus mesme qui eut ainsi finement haussé le chevet à sa marchandise par le maquerelage des loix, cognoissant combien c'est un sot desduit qui ne le feroit valoir par fantaisie et par cherté? En fin c'est tout chair de porc que la sauce diversifie, comme disoit l'hoste de Flaminius.[1] Cupidon est un dieu felon: il faict son jeu à luitter la devotion et la justice; c'est sa gloire, que sa puissance choque tout' autre puissance, et que toutes autres regles cedent aux siennes.

Materiam culpæ prosequiturque suæ.[2]

Et quant au second poinct: serions nous pas moins coqus si nous craignions moins de l'estre, suyvant la complexion des femmes, car la defence les incite et convie?

Ubi velis, nolunt; ubi nolis, volunt ultro;[3]
Concessa pudet ire via.[4]

Quelle meilleure interpretation trouverions nous au faict de Messalina? Elle fit au commencement son mary coqu à cachetes, comme il se faict; mais, conduisant ses parties trop ayséement, par la stupidité qui estoit en luy, elle desdaigna soudain cet usage. La voyla à faire l'amour à la descouverte, advouer des serviteurs, les entretenir et les favoriser à la veüe d'un chacun. Elle vouloit qu'il s'en ressentit. Cet animal ne se pouvant esveiller pour tout cela, et luy rendant ses plaisirs mols et fades par cette trop lache facilité par laquelle il sembloit qu'il les authorisat et legitimat, que fit elle? Femme d'un Empereur sain et vivant, et à Romme, au theatre du monde, en plein midy, en feste et ceremonie publique, et avec Silius, duquel elle jouyssoit long temps devant, elle se marie un jour que son mary estoit hors de la ville. Semble il pas qu'elle s'acheminast à devenir chaste par la nonchallance de son mary, ou qu'elle cerchast un autre mary qui luy esguisast l'appetit par sa jalousie, (*c*) et qui, en luy insistant, l'incitat? (*b*) Mais la premiere difficulté qu'elle rencontra fut aussi la derniere. Cette beste s'esveilla en sursaut. On a souvent pire marché de ces sour-

[1] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.
[2] Ovid, *Tristia*, IV, 1.34.
[3] Terence, *Eunuchus*, IV, 8.43.
[4] Lucan, II, 446.

daus endormis. J'ay veu par experience que cette extreme souffrance, quand elle vient à se desnouer, produit des vengeances plus aspres: car, prenant feu tout à coup, la cholere et la fureur s'emmoncelant en un, esclate tous ses efforts à la premiere charge,

irarumque omnes effundit habenas.[1]

Il la fit mourir et grand nombre de ceux de son intelligence, jusques à tel qui n'en pouvoit mais et qu'elle avoit convié à son lit à coups d'escorgée.[2]

What Virgil says of Venus and Vulcan, Lucretius had said more fittingly of a stolen meeting between her and Mars:

Belli fera mœnera Mavors
Armipotens regit, in gremium qui sæpe tuum se
Rejicit, æterno devinctus vulnere amoris. . . .
Pascit amore avidos inhians in te, Dea, visus,
Eque tuo pendet resupini spiritus ore;
Hunc tu, diva, tuo recubantem corpore sancto
Circumfusa super, suaveis ex ore loquelas
Funde.[3]

When I ponder upon this *rejicit*, *pascit*, *inhians*, *molli*, *fovet*, *medullas*, *labefacta*, *pendit*, *percurrit*, and this noble *circumfusa*, mother of the dainty *infusus*,[4] I hold in contempt these unmeaning glitterings and verbal artifices [5] that have come into the world since. For those worthy writers there was no need of keen and subtle conceits; their language is full and forcible, with natural and unfailing vigour; they are all epigrams — not the tail only, but the head, stomach, and feet.

[1] Virgil, *Æneid*, XII, 499.

[2] This story of Messalina is taken from Tacitus, *Annals*, XI, 26, 27, etc.

[3] Mars, lord of arms, who rules over the cruel works of warfare, often throws himself upon thy bosom, vanquished by the everlasting wound of love. . . . He feasts his eager looks with love, gazing at thee, goddess; and as he reclines, his breath hangs on thy lips; and do thou, goddess, as he reposes in the embrace of thy sacred body, pour forth sweet sayings from thy mouth. — Lucretius, I, 32–34, 36–40.

[4] Of these words, those which do not appear in the passage of Lucretius are found in the verses of Virgil (*Dixerat*, etc.) quoted on p. 17, *supra*.

[5] *Ces menues pointes et allusions verballes.*

There is nothing that signifies effort, nothing that drags; every part moves on at the same pace. (*c*) *Contextus totus virilis est, non sunt circa flosculos occupati.*[1] (*b*) It is not an effeminate eloquence and merely faultless: it is sinewy and solid, and does not so much please as it fills full and entrances the mind, and entrances most the strongest minds. When I behold those noble modes of expression, so vivid, so profound, I do not say this is speaking rightly, I say it is thinking rightly. It is the vivacity of the imagination which exalts and inflates the words. (*c*) *Pectus est quod disertum facit.*[2] (*b*) To these, mere insight was one with language, and large conceptions with appropriate words.[3] Their painting is guided not so much by manual dexterity as by having the object more vividly imprinted on the soul. Gallus [4] speaks simply because he thinks simply. Horace is not satisfied with a superficial expression: it would wrong him; he looks more clearly and further into things; his mind breaks into and ransacks the whole storehouse of words and figures of speech to express itself; and he must have them out of the ordinary, as his conception is out of the ordinary. Plutarch says that he discerned the Latin language by means of things; [5] here it is the same: the meaning illuminates and creates the words; they are not of wind but of flesh and bone. (*c*) They express more than they utter. (*b*) Weak wits also feel something resembling this; for in Italy, in common talk I said what I wished to say; but in serious conversation I

[1] Their writing is of a manly texture; they were not concerned about florid ornaments. — Seneca, *Epistle* 33. Seneca's text reads: *Non fuerunt circa flosculos occupati; totus contextus illorum virilis est.*

[2] It is the understanding that makes a man eloquent. — Quintilian, X, 7.15.

[3] *Nos gens appellent jugement langage, et beaux mots les pleines conceptions.*

[4] In the sixteenth century, six elegies by Maximianus (fifth century) were published and were attributed to Cornelius Gallus. Montaigne quotes them ten times.

[5] "Now in my latter time," he says, "I began to take my Latin books in my hand. And thereby a strange thing to tell you, but yet true: I learned not, nor understood matters so much by the words, as I came to understand the words by common experience and knowledge I had in things." — Plutarch, *Life of Demosthenes* (North's English version of Amyot's French translation).

should not have dared to trust myself to a form of speech which I could not turn or twist out of its usual course. I wish to do with it something personal.

Language gains in value not so much by being handled and used by vigorous minds, not so much from innovations, as by being put to more forcible and various service, stretching it and bending it; they do not bring words to it but they enrich those they use; they give weight and force to their signification and their use, teaching the language unwonted action, but discreetly and dexterously. But how little this agility is given to all men is seen in so many French writers of this age. They are bold enough and scornful enough not to follow the common path; but lack of invention and discretion is their undoing. There is seen in them only a miserable affectation of singularity, feeble and absurd dissimulations which, instead of uplifting, debase the subject. Provided they can pride themselves on novelty, they care nothing for its effectiveness; to lay hold of a new word, they forsake the usual one, often stronger and more pithy.

I find material enough in our language, but some failure in fashioning it, for there is nothing that might not be done with the terms of hunting and of war, which is a fruitful soil to borrow from; and forms of speech, like plants, are improved and strengthened by transplanting. I find it sufficiently copious, but not sufficiently pliable and vigorous; it usually succumbs under a powerful conception. If you are hard pressed,[1] you often perceive that it weakens and bends beneath you, and that in its default the Latin comes to your aid, and to others Greek. Of some of these words which I have just selected we perceive the force with greater difficulty because usage and familiarity have in some sort cheapened their charm to us and made it commonplace; as in our ordinary speech, there are to be found excellent phrases and metaphors of which the beauty withers with age and the colour is tarnished by too general handling. But this takes nothing from their relish for those who have good perceptions,[2] nor does it lessen the glory of those ancient authors who, it is probable, first used these words with brilliancy.

[1] *Si vous allez tendu.* [2] *Qui ont bon nez.*

Men of learning[1] treat these things with too great refinement, in an artificial manner, different from the common and natural one. My page makes love and understands it; read him Leon Hebreu and Ficino;[2] they speak of him, of his thoughts and his acts, and yet he understands nothing of what they say. I do not recognise in Aristotle the greater part of my ordinary emotions; they have been covered and clothed in a different garment, to be worn by his school. God help them![3] Were I of the profession, (*c*) I would naturalise art as much as they artificialise nature.

(*b*) Let us put aside Bembo and Equicola.[4] When I write, I readily do without the company and remembrance of books, for fear lest they interfere with my manner; and also because, in truth, the good authors humble me too much and break down my courage. I freely imitate the shift of that painter who, having wretchedly pictured some cocks, forbade his assistants to let any real cocks come into his shop.[5] (*c*) And I should rather need, to give me a little lustre, the device of the musician Antinonydes[6] who, when he was to give a musical performance, arranged that, before or after him, his audience should listen to other poor singers. (*b*) But it is less easy for me to do without Plutarch; he touches so many subjects[7] and is so full of matter, that on

[1] *Les sciences.*

[2] Leon Hebreo published in 1535 *Dialoghi de Amore*, which was almost as well known in Italy as Castiglione's *Cortegiano*. Montaigne owned a copy of it. Marsiglio Ficino is famous for his Latin translation of Plato, published in Florence at the end of the fifteenth century, which was the one used by Montaigne. He was the author of several other translations and of a considerable number of unimportant original works. Montaigne probably had in mind an early one, *De Voluptate.*

[3] That is, those who have disguised them. *Dieu leur doint bien faire!*

[4] Two Italian contemporaries of Montaigne, both authors of many works. Among those of the Cardinal Pietro Bembo (1470–1547) are *Gli Asolani*, dialogues on love, so called because they were supposed to take place at Asola. Mario Equicola (1460–1539) wrote at the age of sixty-five *Della Natura d'Amore*, spoken of as "a learned and serious work on a trivial subject."

[5] See Plutarch, *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend.*

[6] The proper form of the name is Antigenidas. See Plutarch, *Life of Demetrius.*

[7] *Il est si universel.*

all occasions, and however out of the common the subject you have in hand, he offers himself to your need and extends to you a liberal hand, inexhaustible in treasures and embellishments. It vexes me to be so greatly exposed to the accusation of pillage by those who are familiar with him. (*c*) I can not be with him so casually that I do not steal a leg or a wing from him.

(*b*) To carry out this purpose of mine, it also suits well that I should write in my own house, in an uncivilised region, where no one assists me or stimulates me, where I seldom meet a man who understands the Latin of his Pater Noster and who does not know French even less. I should have done it better elsewhere, but the work would have been less mine; and its chief aim and perfection is to be precisely mine. I should rightly correct an accidental error, of which, since I hasten on heedlessly, I am full; but the imperfections which are common and constant in me it would be disloyal to remove. When some one has said to me, or I have said to myself: "You make too much use of figures of speech; there you have a word of Gascon growth; there you have a hazardous expression" (I eschew none of those that are used on the French streets; they who think to combat usage with grammar make fools of themselves); "there you have an ignorant remark; there a paradoxical one; this other is too simple"; (*c*) "you often play a part; it will be thought that you say in earnest what you say in an assumed character," [1] — (*b*) "Yes," I answer, "but I correct heedless errors, not those of habit. Do I not commonly talk thus? Does not this represent me to the life? Enough. I have done what I desired to do: every one recognises me in my book and my book in me."

I have an aping and imitative tendency; when I undertook to write verses, — and I never wrote any but Latin ones, — they clearly betrayed what poet I had lately read; and of my first Essays some have a slightly extraneous flavour. (*c*) At Paris I speak a somewhat different language from that I speak at Montaigne. (*b*) Whoever I regard attentively quickly stamps me with something belonging to him. What I examine I make my own: an ungainly bearing, a dis-

[1] *A feinte.*

agreeable grimacing, a ridiculous way of speaking; vices even more; in proportion as they fret me, they attach themselves to me and will not let go without being shaken off. I have been heard to swear more by contagion than by nature:[1] (*c*) fatal imitation, like that of the monkeys of horrible size and strength which King Alexander found in a certain region of the Indies, creatures which, except for this, it would have been very difficult to master; but they afforded them the means to do so by their fondness for mimicking every thing they saw done; for thereby the hunters learned to put on their shoes in their sight with many knots of the strings, to muffle their heads with wrappings that were nooses, and to seem to anoint their eyes with birdlime. So those poor beasts unwisely employed to an ill end their imitative propensity: they limed and shackled and strangled themselves.[2] The different faculty of wittily imitating by design the gestures and words of another person, which often causes pleasure and admiration, is no more in me than in a log. When I swear after my own fashion, it is simply by God, which is the most straightforward of all oaths. They say that Socrates swore by the dog; that Zeno used the same exclamation that the Italians use to this day — *Cappari!*[3] that Pythagoras swore by water and air.[4]

(*b*) I am so thoughtlessly apt to receive these superficial impressions that, if I have had on my lips, "Your Grace," or "Your Highness," three days in succession, a week later they escape me instead of "Your Excellency," or "Your Lordship." And what I may have said jestingly and mockingly, I may say the next day seriously. Because of this, I make use in writing somewhat unwillingly of much beaten subjects, for fear of treating them with borrowed ones.[5] Every subject is equally fertile for me. I can find them in any trifle, and may it please God that this I have now in hand was not taken up at the bidding of a merely flighty

[1] *Par similitude que par complexion.*

[2] See Diodorus Siculus, XVII, 20.

[3] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Zeno: Per Capparim . . . jurabat.*

[4] See Idem, *Life of Pythagoras: Non per aërem quem spiro; non per aquam quam bibo.*

[5] *Aux despens d'autruy.*

will! I may be allowed to begin with any one that may please me, for all matters are linked together.

But my wits annoy me because they usually bring forth their most copious and widely floating thoughts,[1] which best please me, unexpectedly and when I am least seeking them; and they quickly vanish, I not having at the moment any means of retaining them: they come when I am on horseback, at the table, in bed, but mostly when on horseback, where I have the most abundant converse with myself. When speaking, I am somewhat sensitively demanding attention and silence, if I am speaking earnestly; whoever interrupts me, stops me. In travelling, the necessary attention to the road cuts into conversation; besides this, I oftenest travel without company suited to continuous talk; wherefore I have leisure enough to talk to myself. It often happens as in my dreams; when dreaming, I entrust them to my memory (for I am apt to dream that I am dreaming); but the next day I well remember of what colour they were, whether merry or sad or strange; but what they were besides, the more I labour to recall, the deeper I thrust it into oblivion. In like manner, of the fortuitous conceptions that come into my imagination there remains in my memory only a vague outline — only so much as is needed to make me fret and fume to no purpose in quest of one.

Or donc, laissant les livres à part, parlant plus materiellement et simplement, je trouve apres tout que l'amour n'est autre chose que la soif de cette jouyssance (*c*) en un subject desiré, ny Venus autre chose que le plaisir à descharger ses vases, qui devient vicieux ou par immoderation ou indiscretion. Pour Socrates l'amour est appetit de generation par l'entremise de la beauté.[2] (*b*) Et, considerant maintesfois la ridicule titillation de ce plaisir, les absurdes mouvemens escervelez et estourdis dequoy il agite Zenon et Cratippus, cette rage indiscrette, ce visage enflammé de fureur et de cruauté au plus doux effect de l'amour, et puis cette morgue grave, severe et ecstatique en une action si folle, (*c*) et qu'on aye logé pesle-mesle nos delices et nos ordures ensemble, (*b*) et que la supreme volupté aye du transy et du

[1] *Plus profondes resveries, plus folles.*

[2] See Plato, *Banquet.*

plaintif comme la douleur, je crois qu' (*c*) il est vrai ce que dict Platon que l'homme est le jouet des dieux,[1]

(*b*) quænam ista jocandi
Sævitia![2]

et que c'est par moquerie que nature nous a laissé la plus trouble de nos actions, la plus commune, pour nous esgaller par là, et apparier les fols et les sages, et nous et les bestes. Le plus contemplatif et prudent homme, quand je l'imagine en cette assiette, je le tiens pour un affronteur de faire le prudent et le contemplatif; ce sont les pieds du paon qui abbatent son orgueuil.

Ridentem dicere verum
Quid vetat?[3]

(*c*) Ceux qui, parmi les jeux, refusent les opinions serieuses, font, dict quelqu'un, comme celuy qui creint d' adorer la statue d'un sainct si elle est sans davantiere. (*b*) Nous mangeons bien et beuvons comme les bestes, mais ce ne sont pas actions qui empeschent les operations de nostre ame. En celles-là nous gardons nostre avantage sur elles; cette-cy met toute autre pensée soubs le joug, abrutit et abestit par son imperieuse authorité toute la theologie et philosophie qui est en Platon; et si il ne s'en plaint pas. Par tout ailleurs vous pouvez garder quelque decence: toutes autres operations souffrent des reigles d'honnesteté; cette-cy ne se peut pas seulement imaginer que vitieuse ou ridicule. Trouvez y, pour voir, un proceder sage et discret. Alexandre disoit qu'il se connoissoit principallement mortel par cette action et par le dormir:[4] le sommeil suffoque et supprime les facultez de nostre ame; le besongne les absorbe et dissipe de mesme. Certes, c'est une marque non seulement de nostre corruption originelle, mais aussi de nostre vanité et deformité. D'un costé, nature nous y pousse, ayant attaché à ce desir la plus noble, utile et plaisante de toutes ses operations; et la nous laisse, d'autre part, accuser et fuyr comme insolente et deshonneste, en rougir et recommander l'abstinence.

[1] See Plato, *Laws*, book VII.
[2] Claudian, *In Eutropium*, I, 24.
[3] Horace, *Satires*, I, 1.24.
[4] See Plutarch, *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend.*

(*c*) Sommes nous pas bien brutes de nommer brutale l'operation qui nous faict? (*b*) Les peuples, és religions, se sont rencontrez en plusieurs convenances, comme sacrifices, luminaires, encensements, jeunes, offrandes, et, entre autres, en la condemnation de cette action. Toutes les opinions y viennent, outre l'usage si estendu (*c*) du tronçonement du prepuce qui en est une punition. (*b*) Nous avons à l'avanture raison de nous blasmer de faire une si sotte production que l'homme; d'appeller l'action honteuse, et honteuses les parties qui y servent; (*c*) (à cette heure sont les miennes proprement honteuses et peneuses).

Les Esseniens de quoi parle Pline,[1] se maintenoient sans nourrisse, sans maillot, plusieurs siecles, de l'abbord des estrangiers qui, suivans cette belle humeur, se rangeoient continuellement à eux; aiant toute une nation hasardé de s'exterminer plus tost que s'engager à un embrassement feminin, et de perdre la suite des hommes plus tost que d'en forger un. Ils disent que Zenon n'eut affaire à femme qu'une fois en sa vie; et que ce fut par civilité, pour ne sembler dedaigner trop obstinement le sexe.[2] (*b*) Chacun fuit à le voir naistre, chacun court à le voir mourir. (*c*) Pour le destruire, on cherche un champ spatieux en pleine lumiere; pour le construire, on se musse dans un creux tenebreux et contreint. (*b*) C'est le devoir de se cacher et rougir pour le faire; et c'est gloire, et naissent plusieurs vertus de le sçavoir deffaire. L'un est injure, l'autre est grace; car Aristote dict que bonifier quelqu'un, c'est le tuer, en certaine frase de son pays.[3] (*c*) Les Atheniens, pour apparier la desfaveur de ces deux actions, aiant à mundifier l'isle de Delos et se justifier envers Apollo, defendirent au pourpris d'icelle tout enterrement et tout enfantement ensemble.[4] (*b*) *Nostri nosmet poenitet.*[5]

There are some nations that conceal themselves while eating.[6] I know a lady, and one of the greatest,[7] who is of

[1] See *Nat. Hist.*, V, 17.
[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Zeno.*
[3] See Plutarch, *Roman Questions*, LII.
[4] See Diodorus Siculus, XII, 17; Thucydides, III, 104.
[5] Terence, *Phormio*, I, 3.20.
[6] See Leo Africanus, *Historical Description of Africa.*
[7] In 1588: *en toute sorte de grandeur.*

the same opinion, that chewing is unseemly in appearance and much lessens woman's charm and beauty; and she does not willingly take food in public.[1] And I know a man who can not endure to see others eat, or to have any one see him, and who shuns all bystanders more when he is filling himself than when he is emptying himself. (*c*) In the Turkish Empire there are many who, to excel others, never allow themselves to be seen at meal-time; who have but one meal a week; who slash and slit their faces and limbs; who never speak to any one;[2] fanatics all, who think that they honour their nation by denaturing themselves; who prize themselves for their misprision;[3] and think to better themselves by becoming worse. (*b*) What an unnatural creature is he who horrifies himself! (*c*) whose very pleasures burden him; who clings to unhappiness!

(*b*) There are those who hide their life, —

Exilioque domos et dulcia limina mutant,[4] —

and withdraw it from the sight of other men; who shun health and cheerfulness as hostile and harmful qualities. Not many sects only, but many peoples, curse their birth and bless their death. (*c*) There are some peoples by whom the sun is abhorred,[5] darkness adored. (*b*) We are quick-witted only in misusing ourselves; that is the real pursuit of the power of our mind, (*c*) which is a dangerous tool when out of order.

(*b*) O miseri! quorum gaudia crimen habent.[6]

Ah! poor man, thou hast enough inevitable disadvantages without adding to them thine invention; and art wretched enough by nature without being so by art; thou hast real and essential deformities in sufficiency without creating imaginary ones. (*c*) Dost thou find thyself too much at ease unless thine ease molest thee? (*b*) Dost thou find that thou

[1] *Ne se presente pas volontiers en public avec appetit.*

[2] See G. Postel, *Des histoires orientales*, etc.

[3] *Qui se prisent de leur mespris.*

[4] Who leave their homes and their dear thresholds for exile. — Virgil, *Georgics*, II, 511.

[5] See Herodotus, IV, 184; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, V, 8.

[6] Poor creatures! who think their joy a sin. — Maximianus (Pseudo-Gallus), I, 180.

hast to perform all the needful duties to which Nature pledges thee, and that she will be remiss and idle in thee unless thou dost impose on thyself new duties? Thou dost not fear to offend against her universal and indubitable laws, and dost spur thyself to obey thine own one-sided and imaginary ones; and the more special, uncertain, and the more gainsaid they are, the more effort dost thou make about them. (*c*) The prescribed rules of thy parish bind thee, those of God and of the world do not touch thee. (*b*) Ponder a little the examples of this thought; thy life is all there.

Les vers de ces deux poetes,[1] traitant ainsi reservéement et discrettement de la lasciveté comme ils font, me semblent la descouvrir et esclairer de plus pres. Les dames couvrent leur sein d'un reseu, les prestres plusieurs choses sacrées; les peintres ombragent leur ouvrage, pour luy donner plus de lustre; et dict-on que le coup du soleil et du vent est plus poisant par reflexion qu'à droit fil. L'Ægyptien respondit sagement à celuy qui luy demandoit: "Que portes tu là, caché soubs ton manteau?" — "Il est caché soubs mon manteau afin que tu ne sçaches pas que c'est." [2] Mais il y a certaines autres choses qu'on cache pour les montrer. Oyez cettuy-là plus ouvert:

Et nudam pressi corpus adusque meum; [3]

il me semble qu'il me chapone. Que Martial retrousse Venus à sa poste, il n'arrive pas à la faire paroistre si entiere. Celuy qui dict tout, il nous saoule et nous desgouste; celuy qui craint à s'exprimer nous achemine à en penser plus qu'il n'en y a. Il y a de la trahison en cette sorte de modestie, et notamment nous entr'ouvrant, comme font ceux-cy, une si belle route à l'imagination. Et l'action et la peinture doivent sentir le larrecin.

L'amour des Espagnols et des Italiens, plus respectueuse et craintifve, plus mineuse et couverte, me plaist. Je ne sçay qui, anciennement, desiroit le gosier allongé comme le col d'une grue pour gouster plus long temps ce qu'il avalloit.[4] Ce souhait est mieux à propos en cette volupté vive et

[1] Virgil and Lucretius.
[2] See Plutarch, *Of Curiosity*.
[3] Ovid, *Amores*, I, 5.24.
[4] It was Philoxenes. See Aristotle, *Ethics*, III, 10.

precipiteuse, mesmes à telles natures comme est la mienne, qui suis vitieux en soudaineté. Pour arrester sa fuitte et l'estendre en preambules, entre eux tout sert de faveur et de recompense: une œillade, une inclination, une parolle, un signe. Qui se pourroit disner de la fumé du rost, feroit-il pas une belle espargne? C'est une passion qui mesle à bien peu d'essence solide beaucoup plus de vanité et resverie fievreuse: il la faut payer et servir de mesme. Apprenons aux dames à se faire valoir, à s'estimer, à nous amuser et à nous piper. Nous faisons nostre charge extreme la premiere: il y a tousjours de l'impetuosité françoise. Faisant filer leurs faveurs et les estallant en detail, chacun, jusques à la vieillesse miserable, y trouve quelque bout de lisiere, selon son vaillant et son merite. Qui n'a jouyssance qu'en la jouyssance, qui ne gaigne que du haut poinct, qui n'aime la chasse qu'en la prinse, il ne luy appartient pas de se mesler à nostre escole. Plus il y a de marches et degrez, plus il y a de hauteur et d'honneur au dernier siege. Nous nous devrions plaire d'y estre conduicts, comme il se faict aux palais magnifiques, par divers portiques et passages, longues et plaisantes galleries, et plusieurs destours. Cette dispensation reviendroit à nostre commodité; nous y arresterions et nous y aymerions plus long temps: sans esperance et sans desir, nous n'allons plus rien qui vaille. Nostre maistrise et entiere possession leur est infiniement à craindre: depuis qu'elles sont du tout rendues à la mercy de nostre foy et constance, elles sont (*c*) un peu bien hasardées. (*b*) Ce sont vertus rares et difficiles: soudain qu'elles sont à nous, nous ne sommes plus à elles;

> postquam cupidæ mentis satiata libido est,
> Verba nihil metuere, nihil perjuria curant.[1]

(*c*) Et Thrasonides, jeune homme grec, fut si amoureux de son amour, qu'il refusa, aïant gaigne le cœur d'une maistresse, d'en jouir pour n'amortir, rassasier et allanguir par la jouissance cette ardeur inquiete de la quelle il se glorifioit et paissoit.[2] (*b*) La cherté donne goust à la viande. Voyez combien la forme des salutations, qui est particuliere à

[1] Catullus, LXIV, 147. The Latin text is changed considerably.
[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Zeno*.

nostre nation, abastardit par sa facilité la grace des baisers, lesquels Socrates dit estre si puissans et dangereux à voler nos cueurs.[1] C'est une desplaisante coustume, et injurieuse aux dames, d'avoir à prester leurs lévres à quiconque a trois valets à sa suitte, pour mal plaisant qu'il soit;

Cuius livida naribus caninis
Dependet glacies rigetque barba,
Centum occurrere malo culilingis.[2]

Et nous mesme n'y gaignons guere: car, comme le monde se voit party, pour trois belles il nous en faut baiser cinquante laides; et à un estomac tendre, comme sont ceux de mon aage, un mauvais baiser en surpaie un bon.

Ils font les poursuyvans en Italie, et les transis, de celles mesmes qui sont à vendre; et se defendent ainsi: qu'il y a des degrez en la jouyssance, et que par services ils veulent obtenir pour eux celle qui est la plus entiere. Elles ne vendent que le corps; la volonté ne peut estre mise en vente, elle est trop libre et trop sienne. Ainsi ceux-cy disent que c'est la volonté qu'ils entreprennent, et ont raison. C'est la volonté qu'il faut servir et practiquer. J'ay horreur d'imaginer mien un corps privé d'affection; et me semble que cette forcenerie est voisine à celle de ce garçon qui alla salir par amour la belle image de Venus que Praxiteles avoit faicte;[3] ou de ce furieux Ægyptien eschauffé apres la charongne d'une morte qu'il embaumoit et ensueroit; lequel donna occasion à la loi, qui fut faicte depuis en Ægypte, que les corps des belles et jeunes femmes et de celles de bonne maison seroyent gardez trois jours avant qu'on les mit entre les mains de ceux qui avoyent charge de prouvoir à leur enterrement.[4] Periander fit plus monstrueusement, qui estendist l'affection conjugale (plus reiglée et legitime) à la jouyssance de Melissa, sa femme trespassée.[5] (*c*) Ne semble ce pas estre une humeur lunatique de la Lune, ne pouvant autrement jouir de Endymion, son mignon, l'aller endormir pour plu-

[1] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, 3.11.
[2] Martial, VII, 95.10.
[3] See Valerius Maximus, VIII, 11, *ext.* 4.
[4] See Herodotus, II, 89.
[5] See Idem, V, 92.

sieurs mois, et se paistre de la jouissance d'un garçon qui ne se remuoit qu'en songe? [1]

(*b*) Je dis pareillement qu'on ayme un corps sans ame ou sans sentiment quand on ayme un corps sans son consentement et sans son desir. Toutes jouyssances ne sont pas unes; il y a des jouyssances ethiques et languissantes; mille autres causes que la bienveuillance nous peuvent acquerir cet octroy des dames. Ce n'est suffisant tesmoignage d'affection; il y peut eschoir de la trahison comme ailleurs: elles n'y vont par fois que d'une fesse,

> Tanquam thura merumque parent:
> Absentem marmoreamve putes.[2]

J'en sçay qui ayment mieux prester cela que leur coche, et qui ne se communiquent que par là. Il faut regarder si vostre compaignie leur plaist pour quelque autre fin encores ou pour celle là seulement, comme d'un gros garson d'estable; en quel rang et à quel pris vous y estes logé,

> tibi si datur uni,
> Quo lapide illa diem, candidiore notet.[3]

Quoy, si elle mange vostre pain à la sauce d'une plus agreable imagination?

> Te tenet, absentes alios suspirat amores.[4]

Comment? avons nous pas veu quelqu'un en nos jours s'estre servy de cette action à l'usage d'une horrible vengence, pour tuer par là et empoisonner, comme il fit, une honneste femme?

They who know Italy will never find it strange if on this subject I seek examples nowhere else; for that nation may be called the mistress of the world in this respect. They have a greater abundance of beautiful women and fewer ugly ones than we; but in rare and surpassing beauties I consider that we are equal. And I judge the same about their minds: [5] of those of the ordinary sort they have many

[1] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 38.
[2] Martial, X, 103.12, and XI, 59.8.
[3] Catullus, LXVIII, 147.
[4] Tibullus, I, 6.35.
[5] Cf. what he says about them in connection with the ancient Greek and Roman "Academies," *infra*, chap. 8, p. 107.

more, and manifestly an animal-like want of intelligence [1] is incomparably more infrequent there; in exceptional souls, and of the highest rank, we are in no wise inferior to them. Were I to extend this comparison, it would seem to me that I might say in respect to valour that it is, on the other hand, as compared with them, universal among us, and inborn; [2] but sometimes we find them possessed with it so complete and so vigorous that it surpasses all the sturdiest examples that we have of it. Marriages in that country go amiss in a certain respect: custom there habitually makes the authority over women so harsh and slavish that the most distant acquaintance with a stranger is as capital as the closest. As a result of this authority, any drawing together is rendered necessarily a reality; [3] and since it all comes to the same thing for them, they have a very easy choice. (*c*) And when they have broken down the barriers, be assured that they are on fire: *luxuria ipsis vinculis, sicut fera bestia irritata, deinde emissa.*[4] (*b*) They must be given the rein a little;

> Vidi ego nuper equum, contra sua frena tenacem,
> Ore reluctanti fulminis ire modo.[5]

The desire for companionship is weakened by giving it some liberty.[6] We experience almost the same fortune. They are too extreme in restraint, we in license.

It is an excellent custom of our nation that our children are entertained in households of the great, there to be nurtured and bred up as pages, as in a school of nobility; and it is a discourtesy, they say, and an affront to refuse this to a gentleman.[7] I have observed (for there are as many dif-

[1] *Brutalité.*

[2] Cf. Book II, chap. 17, "Of Presumption": "Valour . . . has become a common quality."

[3] *Toutes les approches se rendent necessairement substantieles.*

[4] Wantonness, like a wild beast, is maddened by the very bonds that imprison it, and then bursts forth. — Livy, XXXIV, 4. Montaigne has changed the original text somewhat, after his fashion.

[5] I saw of late a horse, rebellious against his bit, tug with his mouth and plunge like a thunderbolt. — Ovid, *Amores*, III, 4.13.

[6] The following sentence of 1588 was omitted in the posthumous editions: *Ayant tant de pieces à mettre en communication, on les achemine à y employer tousjours la derniere, puisque c'est tout d'un pris.*

[7] That is, to refuse to let him have a child to bring up.

ferent ways and methods as there are households) that the ladies who have chosen to give waiting-maids the sternest rules have not had better luck in consequence. There must be moderation about this; a large part of their conduct must be left to their own discretion; for at the best there is no schooling that could check them on all sides. And the truth is that she who has come out scot free from an unrestraining tutelage is much more to be relied on than she who comes forth in good plight from a severe and prison-like school. Our fathers trained the demeanour of their daughters to shyness and timidity (hearts and desires being ever the same); we train ours to boldness; we understand this matter not at all. (*c*) C'est au Sauromates, qui n'ont loi de coucher avec homme, que de leurs mains elles n'en aient tue un autre en guerre.[1] (*b*) A moy, qui n'y ay droit que par les oreilles, suffit si elles me retiennent pour le conseil, suyvant le privilege de mon aage. Je leur conseille donc, (*c*) comme à nous, (*b*) l'abstinence, mais, si ce siecle en est trop ennemy, aumoins la discretion et la modestie. (*c*) Car, comme dict le conte d'Aristippus parlant à des jeunes gens qui rougissoint de le voir entrer chez une courtisane: "Le vice est de n'en pas sortir, non pas d'y entrer." [2] (*b*) Qui ne veut exempter sa conscience, qu'elle exempte son nom: si le fons n'en vaut guiere, que l'apparence tienne bon.

Je loue la gradation et la longueur en la dispensation de leurs faveurs. (*c*) Platon montre qu'en toute espece d'amour la facilité et promptitude est interdicte au tenans.[3] (*b*) C'est un traict de gourmandise, laquelle il faut qu'elles couvrent de toute leur art, de se rendre ainsi temerairement en gros et tumultuairement. Se conduisant, en leur dispensation, ordonéement et mesuréement, elles pipent bien mieux nostre desir et cachent le leur. Qu'elles fuyent tousjours devant nous, je dis celles mesmes qui ont à se laisser attraper: elles nous battent mieux en fuyant, comme les Scythes.[4] De vray, selon la loy que nature leur donne, ce n'est pas proprement à elles de vouloir et desirer; leur rolle

[1] See Herodotus, IV, 117.
[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristippus*.
[3] See Plato, *Banquet*.
[4] See Book I, chap. 12 (Vol. I, pp. 56, 57).

est souffrir, obeir, consentir: c'est pourquoy nature leur a donné une perpetuelle capacité, à nous rare et incertaine; elles ont tousjours leur heure, afin qu'elles soyent tousjours prestes à la nostre; (*c*) *pati natæ*.[1] (*b*) Et où elle a voulu que nos appetis eussent montre et declaration prominente, ell' a faict que les leurs fussent occultes et intestins, et les a (*c*) fournies de pieces impropres à l'ostentation et (*b*) simplement pour la defensive.

(*c*) Il faut laisser à la licence amazonienne pareils traicts à cettuy-cy. Alexandre passant par l'Hircanie, Thalestris, roine des Amazones, le vint trouver avec trois cens gens-d'armes de son sexe, bien montez et bien armez, aïant laissé le demeurant d'une grosse armée, qui la suivoit, audela des voisines montaignes; et luy dict, tout haut et en publiq, que le bruit de ses victoires et de sa valeur l'avoit menée là pour le voir, luy offrir ses moiens et sa puissance au secours de ses entreprinses; et que, le treuvant si beau, jeune et vigoureux, elle, qui estoit parfaicte en toutes ses qualités, luy conseilloit qu'ils couchassent ensemble, affin qu'il nasquit de la plus vaillante femme du monde et du plus vaillant homme qui fut lors vivant, quelque chose de grand et de rare pour l'advenir. Alexandre la remercia du reste; mais, pour donner temps à l'accomplissement de sa derniere demande, arreta treize jours en ce lieu, lesquels il festoia le plus alegrement qu'il peut en faveur d'une si courageuse princesse.[2]

(*b*) We are in almost every thing unjust judges of their actions as they are of ours. I admit the truth when it harms me as I do when it helps me. C'est un vilain desreiglement qui les pousse si souvant au change et les empesche de fermir leur affection en quelque subject que ce soit, comme on voit de cette deesse à qui l'on donne tant de changemens et d'amis; mais si est-il vrai que c'est contre la nature de l'amour s'il n'est violent, et contre la nature de la violence s'il est constant. Et ceux qui s'en estonnent, s'en escrient et cerchent les causes de cette maladie en elles, comme desnaturée et incroïable; que ne voyent ils combien souvent ils la reçoyvent en eux sans espouvantement et sans miracle! Il seroit, à l'adventure, plus estrange d'y voier de l'arrest; ce n'est pas

[1] Born to suffer, Seneca. — *Epistle* 95.

[2] See Diodorus Siculus, XVII, 16; Quintus Curtius, VI, 5.

une passion simplement corporelle: si on ne trouve point de bout en l'avarice et en l'ambition, il n'y en a non plus en la paillardise. Elle vit encore apres la satieté; et ne luy peut on prescrire ny satisfaction constante ny fin: elle va tousjours outre sa possession; et si, l'inconstance leur est à l'adventure aucunement plus pardonnable qu'à nous. Elles peuvent alleguer comme nous l'inclination, qui nous est commune, à la varieté et à la nouvelleté, et alleguer secondement, sans nous, qu'elles achetent chat en poche. (*c*) Jane, royne de Naples, fit estrangler Andreosse, son premier mary, aux grilles de sa fenestre avec un laz d'or et de soie tissu de sa main propre, sur ce qu'aux corvées matrimonialles elle ne luy trouvoit ny les parties ny les efforts assez respondans à l'esperance qu'ell' en avoit conceu à voir sa taille, sa beauté, sa jeunesse et disposition, par où ell' avoit estée prinse et abusée.[1] (*b*) Que l'action a plus d'effort que n'a la souffrance: ainsi, que de leur part tousjours aumoins il est pourveu à la necessité, de nostre part il peut avenir autrement. (*c*) Platon, à cette cause, establit sagement par ses loix, que, pour decider de l'opportunité des mariages, les juges voient les garçons qui y pretendent, tous fins nuds, et les filles nues jusques à la ceinture seulement.[2] (*b*) En nous essayant, elles ne nous trouvent, à l'adventure, pas dignes de leur chois;

> Experta latus, madidoque simillima loro
> Inguina, nec lassa stare coacta manu,
> Deserit imbelles thalamos.[3]

Ce n'est pas tout que la volonté charrie droict. La foiblesse et l'incapacité rompent legitimement un mariage;

> Et quærendum aliunde foret nervosius illud,
> Quod posset zonam solvere virgineam;[4]

pourquoy non? et, selon sa mesure, une intelligence amoureuse plus licentieuse et plus active,

> si blando nequeat superesse labori.[5]

Mais n'est-ce pas grande impudence d'apporter nos imperfections et foiblesses en lieu où nous desirons plaire, et y

[1] See Lavardin, *Histoire de Scanderberg*.
[2] See Plato, *Laws*, book XI.
[3] Martial, VII, 58.3.
[4] Catullus, LXVII, 27.
[5] Virgil, *Georgics*, III, 127.

laisser bonne estime de nous et recommandation? Pour ce peu qu'il m'en faut à cette heure,

ad unum
Mollis opus,[1]

je ne voudrois importuner une personne que j'ay à reverer et craindre:

Fuge suspicari,
Cujus undenum trepidavit ætas
Claudere lustrum.[2]

Nature se devoit contenter d'avoir rendu cet aage miserable, sans le rendre encore ridicule. Je hay de le voir, pour un pouce de chetive vigueur qui l'eschaufe trois fois la semaine, s'empresser et se gendarmer de pareille aspreté, comme s'il avoit quelque grande et legitime journée dans le ventre: un vray feu d'estroupe; (*c*) et admire sa cuisson si vive et fretillante, en un moment si lourdement congelée et esteinte. Cet appetit ne devroit appartenir qu' à la fleur d'une belle jeunesse. (*b*) Fiez vous y, pour voir, à seconder cett' ardeur indefatigable, pleine, constante et magnanime qui est en vous, il vous la lairra vrayement en beau chemin! Renvoiez le hardiment plustost vers quelque enfance molle, estonnée et ignorante, qui tremble encore soubs la verge, et en rougisse,

Indum sanguineo veluti violaverit ostro
Si quis ebur, vel mista rubent ubi lilia multa
Alba rosa.[3]

Qui peut attendre, le lendemain, sans mourir de honte, le desdain de ces beaux yeux consens de sa lâcheté et impertinence, —

Et taciti fecere tamen convitia vultus,[4] —

il n'a jamais senty le contentement et la fierté de les leur avoir battus et ternis par le vigoreux exercice d'une nuict officieuse et active. Quand j'en ay veu quelqu'une s'ennuye de moy, je n'en ay point incontinent accusé sa legereté; j'ay mis en doubte si je n'avois pas raison de m'en prendre à

[1] Horace, *Epodes*, XII, 15.
[2] Idem, *Odes*, II, 4.22.
[3] Virgil, *Æneid*, XII, 67.
[4] Ovid, *Amores*, I, 7.21.

nature plustost. Certes, elle m'a traitté illegitimement et incivilement, —

Si non longa satis, si non bene mentula crassa;[1]

Nimirum sapiunt, videntque parvam
Matronæ quoque mentulam illibenter, —[2]

(*c*) et d'une lesion enormissime. Chacune de mes pieces me faict esgalemant moi que toute autre. Et nulle autre ne me faict plus proprement homme que cette-cy. Je dois au publiq universellement mon portraict.

La sagesse de ma leçon est en verité, en liberté, en essence, toute; desdeignant, au rolle de ses vrais devoirs, ces petites regles, feintes, usuelles, provinciales; naturelle toute, constante, universelle, de laquelle sont filles, mais bastardes, la civilité, la ceremonie. Nous aurons bien les vices de l'apparance, quand nous aurons eu ceux de l'essence. Quand nous aurons faict à ceux icy, nous courrons sus aux autres, si nous trouvons qu'il y faille courir. Car il y a dangier que nous fantasions des offices nouveaux pour excuser nostre negligence envers les naturels offices et pour les confondre. Qu'il soit ainsin: il se voit qu'és lieux où les fautes sont malefices, les malefices ne sont que fautes; qu'és nations où les loix de la bienseance sont plus rares et lasches, les loix primitives et communes sont mieux observées, l'innumerable multitude de tant de devoirs suffoquant nostre soing, l'alanguissant et dissipant. L'application aux menues choses nous retire des pressantes. O que ces hommes superficiels prennent une route facile et plausible au prix de la nostre. Ce sont ombrages de quoi nous nous plastrons et entrepaïons; mais nous n'en païons pas, ainçois en rechargeons nostre debte envers ce grand juge qui trousse nos panneaux et haillons d'autour nos parties honteuses, et ne se feint point à nous voir par tout, jusques à nos intimes et plus secrettes ordures. Utile decence de nostre virginale pudeur, si elle luy pouvoit interdire cette descouverte. En fin, qui desniaiseroit l'homme d'une si scrupuleuse superstition verbale n'aporteroit pas grande perte au monde. Nostre vie est partie en folie, partie en prudence. Qui n'en escrit que

[1] *Priapæa*, LXXX, 1. [2] *Ibid.*, VIII, 4.

reverемment et regulierement, il en laisse en arriere plus de la moitié. Je ne m'excuse pas envers moy: et si je le faisoy, ce seroit plustost de mes excuses que je m'excuseroy que de null' autre partie. Je m'excuse à certaines humeurs, que je tiens plus fortes en nombre que celles qui sont de mon costé. En leur consideration, je dirai encores cecy (car je desire de contenter chacun, chose pourtant tresdifficile, *esse unum hominem accommodatum ad tantam morum ac sermonum et volontatum varietatem*),[1] qu'ils n'ont à se prendre proprement à moi de ce que je fais dire aux authoritez receues et approuvées de plusieurs siecles, et que ce n'est pas raison qu'à faute de rythme ils me refusent la dispance que mesmes des hommes ecclesiastiques des nostres et plus cretez jouissent en ce siecle. En voici deux:

Rimula, dispeream, ni monogramma tua est.[2]

Un vit d'ami la contente et bien traicte.[3]

Quoi tant d'autres?

J'ayme a modestie; et n'est par jugement que j'ai choisi cette sorte de parler scandaleux: c'est nature qui l'a choisi pour moy. Je ne le loue, non plus que toutes formes contreres à l'usage receu; mais je l'excuse et par particulieres et generalles circonstances en allege l'accusation. Suivons.

Pareillement (*b*) d'où peut venir cette usurpation d'authorité souveraine que vous prenez sur celles qui vous favorisent à leurs despens,

Si furtiva dedit nigra munuscula nocte,[4]

que vous en investissez incontinent l'interest, la froideur et une auctorité maritale? C'est une convention libre: que ne vous y prenez vous comme vous les y voulez tenir? (*c*) Il n'y a point de prescription sur les choses volonteres. (*b*) C'est contre la forme; mais il est vray pourtant que j'ay, en mon temps, conduict ce marché, selon que sa nature peut souffrir, aussi conscientieusement qu'autre marché et avec quelque air de justice, et que je ne leur ay tesmoigné de mon affection que ce que j'en sentois, et leur en ay representé naïfvement la decadence, la vigueur et la naissance, les

[1] Q. Cicero, *De Petitione Consulatus*, XIV.
[2] Th. de Bèze, *Juvenilia*. [3] Saint-Gelais. [4] Catullus, LXVIII, 145.

accez et les remises. On n'y va pas tousjours un train. J'ay esté si espargnant à promettre que je pense avoir plus tenu que promis ny deu. Elles y ont trouvé de la fidelité jusques au service de leur inconstance: je dis inconstance advouée et par foys multipliée. Je n'ay jamais rompu avec elles tant que j'y tenois, ne fut que par le bout d'un filet; et, quelques occasions qu'elles m'en ayent donné, n'ay jamais rompu jusques au mespris et à la haine; car telles privautez, lors mesme qu'on les acquiert par les plus honteuses conventions, encores m'obligent elles à quelque bienveuillance. De cholere et d'impatience un peu indiscrete, sur le poinct de leurs ruses et desfuites et de nos contestations, je leur en ay faict voir par fois: car je suis, de ma complexion, subject à des emotions brusques qui nuisent souvent à mes marchez, quoy qu'elles soyent legieres et courtes. Si elles ont voulu essayer la liberté de mon jugement, je ne me suis pas feint à leur donner des advis paternels et mordans, et à les pinser où il leur cuysoit. Si je leur ay laissé à se plaindre de moy, c'est plustost d'y avoir trouvé un amour, au pris de l'usage moderne, sottement consciencieux. J'ay observé ma parolle és choses dequoy on m'eut aysément dispensé; elles se rendoyent lors par fois avec reputation, et soubs des capitulations qu'elles souffroyent aysément estre faucées par le vaincueur. J'ay faict caler, soubs l'interest de leur honneur, le plaisir en son plus grand effort plus d'une fois; et, où la raison me pressoit, les ay armées contre moy, si qu'elles se conduisoyent plus seurement et severement par mes reigles, quand elles s y estoyent franchement remises, qu'elles n'eussent faict par les leurs propres.

(*c*) J'ay, autant que j'ay peu, chargé sur moi seul le hasard de nos assignations pour les en descharger; et ay dressé nos parties tousjours par le plus aspre et inopiné, pour estre moins en soupçon, et en outre, par mon avis, plus accessible. Ils sont ouverts principalemant par les endroits qu'ils tiennent de soi couverts. Les choses moins creintes sont moins defendues et observees: on peut oser plus aisément ce que personne ne pense que vous oserez, qui devient facile par sa difficulté.

(*b*) Jamais homme n'eust ses approches plus impertinemment genitales. Cette voye d'aymer est plus selon la disci-

pline; mais combien elle est ridicule à nos gens, et peu effectuelle, qui le sçait mieux que moy? Si ne m'en viendra point le repentir: je n'y ay plus que perdre;

me tabula sacer
Votiva paries indicat uvida
Suspendisse potenti
Vestimenta maris deo.[1]

Il est à cette heure temps d'en parler ouvertement. Mais tout ainsi comme à un autre je dirois à l'avanture: Mon amy, tu resves; l'amour, de ton temps, a peu de commerce avec la foy et la preud'hommie;

hæc si tu postules
Ratione certa facere, nihilo plus agas,
Quam si des operam, ut cum ratione insanias;[2]

aussi, au rebours, si c'estoit à moy à recommencer, ce seroit certes le mesme train et par mesme progrez, pour infructueux qu'il me peust estre. (*c*) L'insuffisance et la sottise est louable en une action meslouable. (*b*) Autant que je m'esloingne de leur humeur en cela, je m'approche de la mienne.

Au demeurant, en ce marché, je ne me laissois pas tout aller; je m'y plaisois, mais je ne m'y oubliois pas: je reservois en son entier ce peu de sens et de discretion que nature m'a donné, pour leur service et pour le mien; un peu d'esmotion, mais point de resverie. Ma conscience s'y engageoit aussi, jusques à la desbauche et dissolution; mais jusques à l'ingratitude, trahison, malignité et cruauté, non. Je n'achetois pas le plaisir de ce vice à tout pris, et me contentois de son propre et simple coust: (*c*) *Nullum intra se vitium est.*[3] (*b*) Je hay quasi à pareille mesure une oysiveté croupie et endormie, comme un embesongnement espineux et penible. L'un me pince, l'autre m'assopit; j'ayme autant les blesseures comme les meurtrisseures, et les coups trenchans comme les coups orbes. J'ay trouvé en ce marché, quand j'y estois plus propre, une juste moderation entre ces deux extremitez. L'amour est une agitation esveillée, vive

[1] Horace, *Odes*, I, 5.13.
[2] Terence, *Eunuchus*, I, 1.16.
[3] Seneca, *Epistle* 95.

et gaye; je n'en estois ny troublé ny affligé, mais j'en estois eschauffé et encores alteré: il s'en faut arrester là; elle n'est nuisible qu'aux fols.

Un jeune homme demandoit au philosophe Panetius s'il sieroit bien au sage d'estre amoureux. "Laissons là le sage," respondit-il; "mais toy et moy, qui ne le sommes pas, ne nous engageons en chose si esmeuë et violente, qui nous esclave à autruy et nous rende contemptibles à nous." [1] Il disoit vray, qu'il ne faut pas fier chose de soy si precipiteuse à une ame qui n'aie dequoy en soustenir les venues, et dequoy rabatre par effect la parole d'Agesilaus, que la prudence et l'amour ne peuvent ensemble.[2] C'est une vaine occupation, il est vray, messeante, honteuse et illegitime; mais, à la conduire en cette façon, je l'estime salubre, propre à desgourdir un esprit et un corps poisant; et, comme medecin, l'ordonnerois à un homme de ma forme et condition, autant volontiers qu'aucune autre recepte, pour l'esveiller et tenir en force bien avant dans les ans, et le retarder des prises de la vieillesse. Pendant que nous n'en sommes qu'aux fauxbourgs, que le pouls bat encores, —

> Dum nova canities, dum prima et recta senectus,
> Dum superest Lachesi quod torqueat, et pedibus me
> Porto meis, nullo dextram subeunte bacillo,[3] —

nous avons besoing d'estre sollicitez et chatouillez par quelque agitation mordicante comme est cette-cy. Voyez combien elle a rendu de jeunesse, de vigueur et de gaité au sage Anacreon. Et Socrates, plus vieil que je ne suis, parlant d'un object amoureux: "M'estant," dict-il, "appuyé contre son espaule de la mienne et approché ma teste à la sienne, ainsi que nous regardions ensemble dans un livre, je senty, sans mentir, soudein une piqueure dans l'espaule comme de quelque morsure de beste, et fus plus de cinq jours depuis qu'elle me fourmilloit, et m'escoula dans le cœur une demangeaison continuelle." [4] Un attouchement, et fortuite, et par une espaule, aller eschauffer et alterer une ame refroidie et esnervée par l'aage, et la premiere de toutes les humaines

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 116.
[2] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians.*
[3] Juvenal, III, 26.
[4] See Xenophon, *Banquet.*

en reformation! (*c*) Pourquoi non dea? Socrates estoit homme; et ne vouloit ny estre ny sembler autre chose.

(*b*) Philosophy does not at all contend against natural pleasures, provided due measure be kept; (*c*) and it preaches moderation in them, not avoidance; (*b*) the force of its resistance is exerted against unwonted and counterfeit ones. It says that the appetites of the body ought not to be augmented by the mind, and wisely warns us (*c*) to avoid arousing our hunger by gluttony; not to desire to stuff instead of filling the stomach; to shun all enjoyment that brings us to want, and (*b*) all food and drink that makes us thirsty and hungry; [1] as, in the service of love, it [2] bids us take an object which simply satisfies the needs of the body, and does not arouse the mind, which should not attend to its own duty, but merely follow the body and assist it. Mais ay-je pas raison d'estimer que ces preceptes, qui ont pourtant d'ailleurs, selon moy, un peu de rigueur, regardent un corps qui face son office, et qu'à un corps abattu, comme un estomac prosterné, il est excusable de le rechauffer et soustenir par art, et, par l'entremise de la fantasie, luy faire revenir l'appetit et l'allegresse, puis que de foy il l'a perdue?

May we not say that there is nothing in us while we are in this earthly prison that is either purely corporeal or purely spiritual, and that we wrongfully dismember a living man? and that it seems to be reasonable that we should conduct ourselves toward the enjoyment of pleasure as favourably as we do toward pain? Pain, for example, was violent to the point of perfection in the soul of the saints by the practice of penance; the body naturally had a share therein by virtue of their connection, and yet could have small share in the cause; still, they were not content that it should barely follow and assist the afflicted soul; they afflicted the body itself with atrocious and suitable torments, to the end that the soul and the body should die with each other in plunging men into suffering, the more severe, the more salutary. (*c*) In like manner is it not unjust in respect to the pleasures of the body to chill the soul regarding them, and to say that she must be dragged to them as to some en-

[1] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, 3; Plutarch, *of Curiosity*.
[2] That is, philosophy.

forced and slavish obligation and necessity? It is her part rather to brood over them and cherish them, to go to meet them and welcome them, since the office of controlling them belongs to her; as it is also in my opinion for her, in respect to the pleasures which are peculiar to her, to inspire and infuse in the body all sense of them that comports with its nature, and to study that they be agreeable and salutary for it; if it be quite right, as they say, that the body should not follow its appetites to the prejudice of the mind, why is it not also right that the mind should not follow its appetites to the prejudice of the body?

(*b*) Je n'ay point autre passion qui (*c*) me tienne en haleine. (*b*) Ce que l'avarice, l'ambition, les querelles, les proces, font à l'endroit des autres qui, comme moy, n'ont point de vacation assignée, l'amour le feroit plus commodéement: il me rendroit la vigilance, la sobrieté, la grace, le soing de ma personne; r'asseureroit ma contenance à ce que les grimaces de la vieillesse, ces grimaces difformes et pitoiables, ne vinssent à la corrompre; (*c*) me remetteroit aux estudes sains et sages, par où je me peusse rendre plus estimé et plus aimé, ostant à mon esperit le desespoir de soi et de son usage, et le raccointant à soi; (*b*) me divertiroit de mille pensées ennuyeuses, (*c*) de mille chagrins melancholiques, (*b*) que l'oysiveté nous charge en tel aage (*c*) et le mauvais estat de nostre santé; (*b*) reschauferoit, aumoins en songe, ce sang que nature abandonne; soustiendroit le menton et allongeroit un peu (*c*) les nerfs et la vigueur et allegresse de la vie (*b*) à ce pauvre homme qui s'en va le grand train vers sa ruine. Mais j'entens bien que c'est une commodité bien mal aisée à recouvrer: par foiblesse et longue experience nostre goust est devenu plus tendre et plus exquis; nous demandons plus, lors que nous aportons moins; nous voulons le plus choisir, lors que nous meritons le moins d'estre acceptez; nous cognoissans tels, nous sommes moins hardis et plus deffians; rien ne nous peut asseurer d'estre aymez, veu nostre condition et la leur. J'ay honte de me trouver parmy cette verte et bouillante jeunesse,

> Cujus in indomito constantior inguine nervus,
> Quam nova collibus arbor inhæret.[1]

[1] Horace, *Epodes*, XII, 19.

Qu'irions nous presenter nostre misere parmy cette allegresse,

Possint ut juvenes visere fervidi,
Multo non sine risu,
Dilapsam in cineres facem? [1]

Ils ont la force et la raison pour eux; faisons leur place, nous n'avons plus que tenir.

(*c*) Et ce germe de beauté naissante ne se laisse manier à mains si gourdes et pratiquer à moiens purs materiels. Car, comme respondit ce philosofe antien à celuy qui se moquoit de quoi il n'avoit sceu gaigner la bonne grace d'un tendron qu'il pourchassoit: Mon amy, le hameçon ne mord pas à du fromage si frais.[2]

(*b*) Or c'est un commerce qui a besoin de relation et de correspondance: les autres plaisirs que nous recevons se peuvent recognoistre par recompenses de nature diverse; mais cettuy-cy ne se paye que de mesme espece de monnoye. (*c*) En verité, en ce desduit, le plaisir que je fais chatouille plus doucement mon imagination que celuy que je sens. (*b*) Or cil n'a rien de genereux qui peut recevoir plaisir où il n'en donne point: c'est une vile ame, qui veut tout devoir, et qui se plaist de nourrir de la conference avec les personnes ausquels il est en charge. Il n'y a beauté, ny grace, ny privauté si exquise, qu'un galant homme deust desirer à ce prix. Si elles ne nous peuvent faire du bien que par pitié, j'ayme bien plus cher ne vivre point, que de vivre d'aumosne. Je voudrois avoir droit de le leur demander, au stile auquel j'ay veu quester en Italie: *Fate ben per voi:* (*c*) ou à la guise que Cyrus enhortoit ses soldats: Qui s'aimera, si me suive.[3]

(*b*) Ralliez vous, me dira l'on, à celles de vostre condition que la compaignie de mesme fortune vous rendra plus aisées. O la sotte composition et insipide!

Nolo
Barbam vellere mortuo leoni.[4]

[1] Horace, *Odes*, IV, 13.26. [2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Bion*.
[3] See Xenophon, *Cyropædeia*, VII, 1: *Qui . . . seipsum amat, mecum pugnet*.
[4] Martial, X, 90.10.

(*c*) Xenophon emploie pour objection et accusation, à l'encontre de Menon, qu'en son amour il embesongna des objects passant fleur.[1] Je treuve plus de volupte à seulement voir le juste et doux meslange de deux jeunes beautés ou à le seulement considerer par fantasie, qu'à faire moimesmes le second d'un meslange triste et informe. (*b*) Je resigne cet appetit fantastique à l'Empereur Galba, qui ne s'adonnoit qu'aux chairs dures et vieilles;[2] et à ce pauvre miserable, —

O ego di' faciant talem te cernere possim,
Charaque mutatis oscula ferre comis,
Amplectique meis corpus non pingue lacertis![3]

(*c*) Et entre les premieres laideurs je compte les beautez artificielles et forcées. Emonez, jeune gars de Chio, pensant par des beaux atours acquerir la beauté que nature luy ostoit, se presenta au philosophe Arcesilaus, et luy demanda si un sage se pourroit voir amoureux: "Oui dea," respondit l'autre, "pourveu que ce ne soit pas d'une beauté parée et sophistiquée come la tiene."[4] Une laideur et une vieillesse avouée est moins vieille et moins laide à mon gre qu'un' autre peinte et lissée.

(*b*) Le diray-je, pourveu qu'on ne m'en prenne à la gorge? l'amour ne me semble proprement et naturellement en sa saison qu'en l'aage voisin de l'enfance, —

Quem si puellarum insereres choro,
Mille sagaces falleret hospites
Discrimen obscurum, solutis
Crinibus ambiguoque vultu.[5]

(*c*) Et la beauté non plus. Car ce que Homere l'estend jusques à ce que le menton commence à s'ombrager, Platon mesme l'a remarqué pour rare fleur.[6] Et est notoire la cause pour la quelle si plaisammant le sophiste Dion appeloit les poils folets de l'adolescence "Aristogitons" et "Harmodiens."[7] (*b*) En la virilité, je le trouve desja aucunement hors de son siege, non qu'en la vieillesse;

[1] See the *Anabasis*, II, 6.15.
[2] See Suetonius, *Life of Galba*.
[3] Ovid, *De Ponto*, I, 4.49.
[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Arcesilaus*.
[5] Horace, *Odes*, II, 5.21.
[6] See the *Protagoras*.
[7] See Plutarch, *Of Love*.

Importunus enim transvolat aridas
Quercus.[1]

(*c*) Et Marguerite, Roine de Navarre, alonge, en femme, bien loing l'avantage des femmes, ordonnant qu'il est saison, à trente ans, qu'elles changent le titre de belles en bonnes.[2]

(*b*) Plus courte possession nous luy donnons sur nostre vie, mieux nous en valons. Voyez son port: c'est un menton puerile. Qui ne sçait, en son eschole, combien on procede au rebours de tout ordre? L'estude, l'exercitation, l'usage, sont voies à l'insuffisance; les novices y regentent: (*c*) *Amor ordinem nescit.*[3] (*b*) Certes, sa conduicte a plus de garbe, quand elle est meslée d'inadvertance et de trouble; les fautes, les succez contraires, y donnent poincte et grace: pourveu qu'elle soit aspre et affamée, il chaut peu qu'elle soit prudente. Voyez comme il va chancelant, chopant et folastrant; on le met aux ceps quand on le guide par art et sagesse, et contraint on sa divine liberté quand on le submet à ces mains barbues et calleuses.

Au demeurant, je leur oy souvent peindre cette intelligence toute spirituelle, et desdaigner de mettre en consideration l'interest que les sens y ont. Tout y sert; mais je puis dire avoir veu souvent que nous avons excusé la foiblesse de leurs esprits en faveur de leurs beautez corporelles; mais que je n'ay point encore veu qu'en faveur de la beauté de l'esprit, tant prudent et meur soit-il, elles vueillent prester la main à un corps qui tombe tant soit peu en decadence. Que ne prend il envie à quelqu'une de cette noble harde Socratique[4] du corps à l'esprit, (*c*) achetant au prix de ses cuisses une intelligence et generation philosofique et spirituelle, le plus haut prix où elle les puisse monter? Platon ordone en ses loix que celuy qui aura faict quelque signalé et utile exploit en la guerre ne puisse estre refusé durant l'expedition d'icelle, sans respect de sa laideur ou de son aage, du baiser ou autre faveur amoureuse de qui il la veuille.[5] Ce qu'il treuve si

[1] Horace, *Odes*, IV, 13.9.
[2] See the *Heptameron*, 4me Journée, Nouvelle 35.
[3] St. Jérôme, *Epistle to Chromatius.*
[4] See Plato, *Banquet.*
[5] See the *Republic*, book V.

juste en recomandation de la valeur militere, ne le peut il pas estre aussi en recomandation de quelqu' autre valeur? Et que ne prend il envie à une (*b*) de præoccuper sur ses compaignes la gloire de cet amour chaste? chaste, dis-je bien,

> nam si quando ad prœlia ventum est,
> Ut quondam in stipulis magnus sine viribus ignis
> Incassum furit.[1]

Les vices qui s'estouffent en la pensée ne sont pas des pires.

Pour finir ce notable commentaire, qui m'est eschappé d'un flux de caquet, flux impetueux par fois et nuisible, —

> Ut missum sponsi furtivo munere malum
> Procurrit casto virginis e gremio,
> Quod miseræ oblitæ molli sub veste locatum,
> Dum adventu matris prosilit, excutitur,
> Atque illud prono præceps agitur decursu;
> Huic manat tristi conscius ore rubor,[2] —

je dis que les masles et femelles sont jettez en mesme moule; sauf l'institution et l'usage, la difference n'y est pas grande. (*c*) Platon appelle indifferemment les uns et les autres à la société de tous estudes, exercices, charges, vacations guerrieres et paisibles, en sa republique;[3] et le philosofe Antisthenes ostoit toute distinction entre leur vertu et la nostre.[4] (*b*) Il est bien plus aisé d'accuser l'un sexe, que d'excuser l'autre. C'est ce qu'on dict: le fourgon se moque de la poele.

[1] Virgil, *Georgics*, III, 98.
[2] Catullus, LXV, 19.
[3] See Plato, *Republic*, book V.
[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Antisthenes*.

CHAPTER VI

OF COACHES

The Essay opens with an introductory paragraph on the difficulty of ascertaining "the master cause" of any effect, and passes on to controvert Plutarch's belief that the cause of seasickness is fear. This, Montaigne says, he knows by experience is not the case, as he is very subject to seasickness and he is never afraid on the water — or elsewhere. He says, delightfully, that he has not courage enough to be afraid: if he were once overcome, he could never recover himself. In an earlier Essay he declares: "The thing I am most afraid of is fear."

He goes on to say that he hates travelling by coach, litter, or boat, or in any other way than on horseback. And speaking of coaches, he dwells for a moment on their ancient use in war, and then mentions the strange *attelages* — lions, tigers, stags, dogs, naked women, ostriches — that the Roman emperors made use of.

The strangeness of these inventions suggests the question of excessive expenses on the part of monarchs, which is admirably discussed for several pages, then passes into a striking sketch of the magnificence and luxury of the old Roman spectacles; and that leads to "the reflection which every one makes, but which can never be worn out, as to the indefinitely small proportion which our knowledge of past times bears to our ignorance of them."

Then he remarks how little we know of the present world, "the world that is slipping on while we are in it." Thence he diverges, as Sir Fitzjames Stephen has said (in his *Horæ Sabbaticæ*), "into a really beautiful set of reflections on the discovery of America, full of a delicate humour." He goes on to show how great were the natural gifts of the Mexicans and other natives of America, and how little they had gained except injury from the superior knowledge of their conquerors. This portion of the Essay has a peculiar interest, as M. Chimard has ably pointed out (*L'Exotisme americaine dans la littérature française au xvi^e siècle*, 1911), when studied in connection with the Essay "Of Cannibals" (Book I, chapter 31), written some eight years earlier.

There is an essential difference of character between them. As M. Chimard remarks: "In the first, Montaigne gave expression only to his curiosity, his liking for examining small and picturesque facts; in the later Essay, his conscience has been awakened, he regards the conditions under a more searching light, and he distinctly takes sides in the name of justice and humanity for the ancient possessors of the 'Terres Nouvelles' against their barbarous conquerors."

In 1580 Montaigne's thoughts were not less of the defects and prejudices of his compatriots than of the merits of savages; in 1588 he wears no longer his sarcastic smile; and his indignation gives him words

that do him the more honour because he is but little subject to such bursts of passion. He knew more than before of the facts and conditions of the conquest and of their horribleness; and his freedom of thought made him capable — more than any other of the defenders of the Indians in those days — of this noble appeal to justice. After several pages about Cortez, Pizarro, and the kings of Mexico and Peru, he finishes the digression by returning "to the subject" — of coaches! *Retumbons à nos coches*, he says; but it is only to state that the Peruvians did not use them, and the Essay concludes abruptly.

This Essay is a good specimen of the way in which Montaigne's matter took shape under his hand, or rather *grew*, — almost like Jack's beanstalk, — supported one does not well perceive on what, but serving as a ladder to delightful regions.

IT is very easy to verify that the great authors, when writing of causes, take account not only of those which they think are true causes, but also of those which they do not believe, provided that these have some novelty or some beauty. They speak truly and profitably enough if they speak sagaciously. We can not make sure of the sovereign cause; we pile up many causes, to see if by chance it will be found among the number,

Namque unam dicere causam
Non satis est, verum pluris, unde una tamen sit.[1]

Do you ask me whence comes the custom of blessing those who sneeze? We produce three sorts of wind: that which comes from below is too foul; that which comes through the mouth implies some reproach of gluttony; the third is sneezing, and, because it comes from the head and is blameless, we give it this honourable greeting. Do not laugh at this conceit; it is, they say, Aristotle's.[2] It seems to me that I have seen that Plutarch (who is, of all the authors I know, the one who most successfully commingled art with nature and insight with knowledge[3]), when considering the cause of the sickness of the stomach that befalls those who travel by sea, says that it is due to fear, he having found some reason by

[1] For it is not enough to mention one cause; but we should mention many, of which one may prove to be the true one. — Lucretius, VI, 703. The original text reads: *Sunt aliquot quoque res quarum unam dicere causam.*

[2] See Aristotle, *Problemata*, sect. 33, question 9.

[3] *Le jugement à la science.*

which he proved that fear may produce such an effect.[1] I, who am very subject to it, know well that this cause does not touch me, and I know it, not by argument, but by actual experience; without bringing forward what I have been told, that the same thing happens often to beasts, especially to swine, which are without any apprehension of danger; and what an acquaintance of mine testified to me about himself, that being very subject to it, the desire to vomit had two or three times passed away when he was much frightened in a great storm; (*c*) as with this ancient writer: *Pejus vexabar quam ut periculum mihi succurreret.*[2] (*b*) I have never felt fear on the water, — nor have I elsewhere (and just occasion for it has often enough presented itself, if death be one), — which has disturbed or bewildered me. Fear proceeds sometimes from lack of judgement as well as from lack of courage. All the dangers that I have seen I have seen with my eyes wide open, with clear vision, sound and perfect; indeed, it needs courage to fear.[3] Fear served me on one occasion, more than any thing else, to guide and order my escape so that it was (*c*) if not without fear, at all events (*b*) without terror and without confusion; it was excited, but not heedless or dismayed. Great souls go much further and show us escapes not only composed and steady,[4] but audacious. To mention that which Alcibiades tells of Socrates, his companion in arms: "I found him," he says, "after the rout of our army, him and Laches, among the last of the fugitives, and I watched him at my leisure and in safety, for I was on a good horse and he on foot, and thus we had fought. I observed specially how much discretion and resolution he showed in comparison with Laches; and then the gallantry of his step, in nowise different from his usual pace, his steady and well-directed glance, regarding and judging what was taking place about him, looking sometimes at these, sometimes at those, — friends and foes, — in a way that encouraged the former and signified to the latter that he would sell his blood and his life dear to whosoever should

[1] See Plutarch, *Natural Causes*.
[2] I was in too great distress to think of danger. — Seneca, *Epistle* 53.
[3] "Courage to let the courage sink." — Arthur Hugh Clough.
[4] *Saines*.

try to take it from him; and thus saved himself and Laches. For such men are not readily attacked; it is the terrified who are pursued." [1] Such is the testimony of this great captain, which teaches us, what we experience every day, that nothing so casts us into danger as an inconsiderate eagerness to avoid it. (*c*) *Quo timoris minus est, eo minus ferme periculi est.*[2] (*b*) Our common people are mistaken when they say that such a man fears death because they recognise that he is thinking about it, and that he foresees it. Foresight belongs equally to what touches us for good and for ill. To consider and estimate our danger is to some extent the opposite of being daunted by it.

I do not feel myself to be strong enough to withstand the onset and impetuosity of this passion of fear or of any other vehement passion.[3] If I were once vanquished and prostrated by it I should never quite wholly recover myself. What had caused my soul to lose her footing would never permit her to stand upright again as before; she examines and searches herself too keenly and profoundly, and therefore would never allow the wound she had received to close and heal. It has been well for me that no illness has ever yet upset her; every attack that is made upon me I meet and resist armed from head to foot; [4] so the first one who should prevail over me would leave me without resource. There is no need of a second; [5] at whatever point the flood breaks through my embankment, there I find myself irremediably open and submerged. (*c*) Epicurus says that the wise man can never pass from that state to its contrary.[6] I have some belief, on the other hand, that he who has once been very foolish will never at any other time be very wise. (*b*) God sends the cold according to the garment, and sends me afflictions [7] according to the power that I have to withstand

[1] See Plato, *Banquet*, near the end. Montaigne's quotation is not a translation, but a summary.

[2] Usually the less fear there is, the less is the danger. — Livy, XXII, 5.

[3] Cf. Book I, chap. 18 (Vol. 1, p. 99): "The thing I am most afraid of is fear."

[4] *En mon haut appareil.*

[5] *Je n'en fais poinct à deux.*

[6] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Epicurus.*

[7] *Passions.*

them. Nature, having uncovered me on one side, has covered me on the other; having sparingly supplied me with strength, she has supplied me with insensibility and with a limited or dull power of apprehension.[1]

Now, I can not endure for long (and I found it in my youth more difficult to endure) either coach, or litter, or boat, and I detest every other conveyance than a horse, whether in a city or in the country; but I can endure a litter less well than a coach, and I can more easily endure, for the same reason, a rough agitation of the water, enough to give rise to fear, than the motion that is felt in calm weather. By the slight shock that the oars give in pushing the boat under us, I feel my head and stomach disordered, I know not how; just as I can not endure an unsteady seat beneath me. When a sail or a current carries us along smoothly, or when we are towed, that unbroken movement does not disturb me at all; it is intermittent motion that harms me, and especially when it is gentle. I can not otherwise describe it. Physicians have ordered me to compress and gird my abdomen with a bandage, to provide for this mishap, but I have not tried it, being wont to wrestle with the defects of my nature and to overcome them by myself.

(*c*) Were my memory sufficiently instructed, I would not grudge the time to speak here of the infinite variety that history presents of the use, varying in different nations and in different periods, of chariots for service in war; of great effect, it seems to me, and of urgent necessity; so that it is a wonder that we have lost all knowledge thereof. I will say about this only that just recently, in the time of our fathers, the Hungarians made very profitable use of them against the Turks, each of them carrying a soldier with a buckler,[2] and a musketeer and a number of harquebuses side by side, ready loaded, the whole protected by a screen of shields[3] after the fashion of a galley. Their battle-front was formed by three thousand such chariots, and, after the cannon had given the signal, they sent them forward and made the

[1] Cf. Book I, chap. 26 (Vol. I, p. 233): "My intellect was slow . . . my comprehension was tardy"; Book II, chap. 17 (Vol. III, p. 63): "My mind is lazy and not keen. . . . My apprehension is slow and confused."

[2] *Un rondelier.* See Chalcondylas, VII, 7. [3] *Une pavesade.*

enemy swallow that volley before tasting the rest; or else they drove the chariots into the enemy's ranks, to break them and open the way — not to speak of the assistance derived from them in flanking, in a dangerous spot, troops marching from place to place, or in quickly protecting and fortifying a post. In my time a gentleman living on one of our frontiers, who was of unwieldy size and could find no horse able to carry his weight, being engaged in hostilities,[1] travelled through the country in a chariot of this description and found himself well suited by it. But let us leave these war-chariots. The kings of our first race,[2] as if their indolence were not well enough known by stronger tokens,[3] drove through the country in a coach drawn by four oxen. (*b*) Mark Antony was the first who had himself drawn through Rome, and a minstrel wench with him, by lions harnessed to a coach. Heliogabalus afterward did the same, calling himself Cybele, mother of the Gods; and was also drawn by tigers, counterfeiting the god Bacchus; sometimes, too, he harnessed two stags to his coach, and at another time four dogs, and again four naked wenches, being drawn by them in state, himself stark naked. The Emperor Firmus had his coach drawn by ostriches of marvellous size, so that he seemed to fly rather than to roll along.[4]

The strangeness of these manners puts into my head this different thought: that it is a kind of pusillanimity in monarchs and a proof that they do not sufficiently recognise what they are, when they labour to make themselves honoured and conspicuous by excessive expenditure. It would be excusable in a foreign land; but among his own subjects, where he is all-powerful, he derives from his high position

[1] *Aiant une querelle.*

[2] The Merovingians. See du Haillant, *Histoire des Rois de France.*

[3] The phrase, "as if . . . tokens," is not found in the *Édition Municipale*, but was added in 1595.

[4] Crinitus (*De Honesta Disciplina*, XVI, 10) may have been Montaigne's source for all three of these examples. For Antonius, see also Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VIII, 16, and Plutarch, *Life of Antony;* for Heliogabalus, the *Life* by Ælius Lampridius; for Firmus, the *Life* by Flavius Vopiscus. Firmus was not emperor, but one of the *minusculi tyranni*, although he is called *imperator* by Crinitus; Vopiscus speaks of his *sitting on* enormous ostriches.

the most extreme degree of honour to which he can attain; as likewise in the case of a gentleman, it seems to me that it is superfluous to dress handsomely at home: his house, his retinue, his table sufficiently answer for him. (*c*) The advice that Isocrates gives his king does not seem to me unreasonable: that he should be splendid in furniture and household articles, since that is a permanent outlay which descends to his successors; and that he should avoid all kinds of magnificence that shortly pass out of use and out of remembrance.[1] (*b*) I liked when I was young to dress handsomely, lacking other handsomeness, and it became me well; there are those on whom fine clothes are wasted.[2]

We have wonderful accounts of the frugality of our kings in regard to their persons and their gifts — great kings in reputation, in valour, and in fortune. Demosthenes opposed valiantly the law of his city which allotted the public funds for the stately conduct of games and of their festivals; he would have their greatness shew itself in a number of well-equipped ships and of good, well-furnished armies.[3] (*c*) And there is reason to blame Theophrastus, who sets forth a contrary opinion in his book on riches, and maintains that kind of outlay to be the proper fruit of opulence.[4] These are pleasures, says Aristotle,[5] which concern only the lowest commonalty, which vanish from the memory as soon as one is sated with them, and which no judicious and sober-minded man can value. It would seem to me much more royal as well as more useful, just, and durable, that such funds should be used for ports, harbours, fortifications, and walls, stately buildings, churches, hospitals, schools, and the improvements of streets and roads;[6] wherein Pope Gregory XIII left a memory long to be praised; and wherein our Queen Catherine would testify for long years to come

[1] See Isocrates, *Oratio ad Nicoclem*, VI, 19.

[2] *Sur qui les belles robes pleurent.*

[3] See the *Third Olynthiae.*

[4] See Cicero, *De Off.*, II, 16.

[5] See *Ibid.*, 15. This passage of Cicero has given rise to much discussion. No such "reproach" can be found in Aristotle, and in many editions of Cicero the name has been changed to "Aristo Ceus"; but in all extant MSS and early editions it is "Aristoteles."

[6] See *Ibid.*, 17.

her natural liberality and munificence, if her means were sufficient for her desires. Fortune has greatly pained me by interrupting the fine structure of the new bridge of our great city and depriving me of the hope of seeing it in use before I die.

(*b*) Moreover, it seems to the subjects who are spectators of these triumphal shows that their own riches are displayed to them and that they are feasted at their own expense; for the people generally presume with their kings, as we do with our servants, that they are to take care to supply us in abundance with all that we need, but that they are in no wise to have any part in it. And therefore the Emperor Galba, having received pleasure from a musician during his supper, had his money-box brought and gave him a handful of crowns, which he took from it, with these words; "This is not public money, it is my own." [1] But it most often happens that the people are right, and that their eyes are fed with what should feed their stomachs. Liberality itself has not its full lustre in the hands of a sovereign; private persons have more claim; for, to take it as things are, a king has nothing really his own: he owes himself to others. (*c*) The power of administering justice is conferred, not for the benefit of him who judges, but for the benefit of him who is judged. One man is made superior to another, never for his own benefit, but for the benefit of the inferior; and a physician is a physician for the sick man's sake, not for his own. The purpose of all authority,[2] as of all art, lies outside of itself: *nulla ars in se versatur*.[3] (*b*) For this reason they who have charge of the childhood of princes, when they pride themselves upon inculcating in them this virtue of open-handedness, and teach them never to deny any thing and to regard nothing so well employed as what they give (instruction which I have seen to be much in favour in my day), either look more to their own profit than to the profit of their master, or ill understand to whom they speak. It is too easy to instill liberality in him who has the wherewithal

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Galba*.

[2] *Toute magistrature*. This addition of 1595 is imitated from Plato, *Republic*, book I.

[3] No art is concerned with itself. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, V, 6.

to indulge it as much as he will at the expense of others. (*c*) And as the esteem in which he is held is governed, not by the measure of the present, but by the measure of the means of him who practises liberality, it becomes a vain thing in hands so powerful. They find that they are prodigal before they are liberal. (*b*) Hence, it [1] is of little worth in comparison with other kingly virtues, and is, as the tyrant Dionysius said, the only one that suits well with tyranny itself.[2] I would teach them rather this verse of the husbandman of old, —

Τῇ χειρὶ δεῖ σπείρειν, ἀλλὰ μὴ ὅλῳ τῷ θυλάκῳ,[3] —

that he who would have a good crop must sow with the hand, not pour from a bag; (*c*) the seed must be scattered, not spilt; (*b*) and that, having to give, or, to say better, to pay and return to so many people according to what they have deserved, he must be a loyal and discreet dispenser. If a prince's liberality lacks prudence and moderation, I like better that he should be avaricious.

Kingly virtue seems to consist chiefly in justice; and of all the parts of justice, that which is in company with liberality best stamps kings; for that they have reserved for their special office, while all other forms of justice they administer through the instrumentality of others. Unmeasured bounty is a feeble means for them to acquire good-will; for it repels more people than it attracts. (*c*) *Quo in plures usus sis, minus in multos uti possis. Quid autem est stultius quam quod libenter facias, curare ut id diutius facere non possis?* [4] (*b*) And if it be employed without respect to merit, it puts to shame him who receives it, and it is received without gratitude. Tyrants have been sacrificed to the hatred of the people by the hands of the very men whom they have wrongfully advanced, — buffoons, panders, minstrels, and other such riff-raff,[5] — these thinking to make secure their

[1] That is, liberality. [2] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.

[3] Montaigne probably took this from J. Lipsius, *De Amphitheatro*.

[4] The more you use it for the good of many, the less you can use it for the good of many. Now what is more foolish than to make it impossible for you to continue to shew your good-will? — Cicero, *De Off.*, II, 15.

[5] This parenthetical clause of 1588 was stricken out on the Bordeaux copy, but restored in 1595.

possession of advantages improperly received, by shewing that they hold in contempt and hatred him from whom they came, and that therein they agree with the popular judgement and opinion. The subjects of a prince immoderate in gifts become immoderate in demands; they carve for themselves,[1] not with reason, but by example. Surely there is often cause for blushing at our impudence; we are overpaid from the standpoint of justice, when the recompense equals our service; for do we owe to our prince nothing by natural obligation? If he makes good all we have expended, he does too much; it is enough if he helps with it; more than that is to be called beneficence, which can not be exacted, for the very word liberality suggests liberty. With our way of doing, this has no end; what has been received is not taken into account; only future liberality gives pleasure; wherefore the more a prince exhausts himself in giving, the more he impoverishes himself in friends. (*c*) How should he satisfy desires which increase in proportion as they are replenished?[2] He whose thoughts are of taking no longer thinks of what he has taken; greed has nothing so much its own as being ungrateful.

The example of Cyrus will not ill fit this place, to serve the kings of to-day as a touchstone to recognise whether their gifts are well or ill bestowed, and to show them how much more fortunately that emperor aimed his gifts than they do; since they are reduced to make their subsequent borrowings from subjects unknown to them, and rather from those whom they have treated ill than from those whom they have treated well, and they receive assistance in which there is nothing gratuitous save the name. Crœsus reproved him[3] for his bounty and reckoned up what his wealth would have amounted to if he had kept his hands more tightly closed. He desired to justify his liberality, and, sending messengers on all sides to the grandees of his realm whom he had especially favoured, requested each of them to assist him with as much money as he could, to meet an urgent call upon him, and to send it to him with a statement.[4] When all the notes were brought to him, each of his

[1] *Ils se taillent.*
[2] See Seneca, *Epistle* 73.
[3] Cyrus.
[4] *Par declaration.*

friends, thinking that it was not enough to do for him to offer him only as much as he himself had received from his munificence, adding thereto much of his own wealth, it was found that the total amounted to much more than what was claimed by the thrift of Crœsus. Whereupon Cyrus remarked: "I am no less enamoured of wealth than other princes and am rather a better manager of it. You see at how little cost I have acquired the inestimable treasure of so many friends, and how much more loyal treasurers they are for me than would be mercenary men, without obligation or affection; and that my substance is better placed than in strong boxes calling down upon me the hatred, envy, and contempt of other princes." [1]

(*b*) The emperors found an excuse for the extravagant cost of their games and public shows in that their authority somewhat depended (at least in appearance) on the humour of the Roman people, who had been accustomed time out of mind to be courted by spectacles and excessive expenditure of this sort. But originally it had been private persons who had fostered this custom of conferring pleasure on their fellow citizens and friends, chiefly from their own purse, by such profusion, and magnificence; it had quite a different savour when the masters came to copy it. (*c*) *Pecuniarum translatio a justis dominis ad alienos non debet liberalis videri.*[2] Philip, because his son tried by gifts to gain the good-will of the Macedonians, thus rebuked him in a letter: "What! dost thou desire that thy subjects should regard thee as their purse-bearer, not as their king? Wouldst thou bribe them? Bribe them with the benefits of thy virtue, not with the benefits of thy strong-box." [3]

(*b*) It was, however, a fine thing to have brought and planted in the amphitheatre a large number of big trees, all growing and flourishing, disposed in a beautiful arrangement to represent a great shady forest; and the first day to turn therein a thousand ostriches, a thousand stags, a thousand wild boars, and a thousand fallow deer, abandoning

[1] See Xenophon, *Cyropædeia*, VIII, 2.

[2] The transference of money from its rightful owners to strangers should not be regarded as generous. — Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 14.

[3] See *Ibid.*, II, 15.

them to the populace to destroy; the next day, to have slaughtered in its presence a hundred great lions, a hundred leopards, and three hundred bears; and for the third day to have three hundred pairs of gladiators fight to the death — and this was done by the Emperor Probus.[1] It was also a fine thing to see those vast amphitheatres, the outside faced with marble, wrought with carvings and statues, the interior gleaming with rare enrichment, —

Baltheus en gemmis, en illita porticus auro,[2] —

all the sides of this great open space filled and environed from the bottom to the top with sixty or eighty rows of seats, also of marble, covered with cushions, —

Exeat, inquit,
Si pudor est, et de pulvino surgat equestri,
Cujus res legi non sufficit,[3] —

on which a hundred thousand men could sit comfortably, and [when the sports began] the space in the centre, where the games were played, was made, first by artificial means, to gape and split into chasms, representing caves which vomited forth the beasts appointed for the spectacle; and then it was inundated with deep water in which swam many sea monsters and on which floated armed ships, to represent a naval battle; and after that it was drained and dried up anew for the combats of the gladiators; and finally it was strewn with cinnabar and storax, instead of sand, to prepare for an accustomed festival for that whole infinite number of people — the last act of a single day;

Quoties nos descendentis arenæ
Vidimus in partes, ruptaque voragine terræ
Emersisse feras, et iisdem sæpe latebris
Aurea cum croceo creverunt arbuta libro!

[1] See Crinitus, *De Honesta Disciplina*, XII, 7.

[2] The circuit of the theatre bestudded with gems, the portico overlaid with gold. — Calpurnius, *Eclogues*, VII, 47. Taken by Montaigne from J. Lipsius, *De Amphitheatro*, from which this whole passage is derived, down to the last quotation from Calpurnius (p. 85).

[3] "Let him depart," he says, "if he is ashamed, and let him rise from the cushioned seat of a knight, if his property is not enough for the law." — Juvenal, III, 153.

Nec solum nobis silvestria cernere monstra
Contigit, æquoreos ego cum certantibus ursis
Spectavi vitulos, et equorum nomine dignum,
Sed deforme pecus.[1]

Sometimes there was constructed there a high hill covered with fruit trees and trees in full leaf, and at its summit gushed a stream of water as from the mouth of a living spring. Sometimes a great ship was sailing along, which opened and divided of itself, and having brought forth from its womb four or five hundred beasts to be fought with, closed again and vanished without help. At other times, from the floor of the arena they made springs and streams of water shoot out, which mounted aloft to that measureless height, and sprinkled and perfumed that great multitude. To protect themselves from the inclemency of the weather, they covered that vast space sometimes with embroidered purple curtains, sometimes with silk of this or that colour, and spread them and drew them back in a moment as they chose:

Quamvis non modico caleant spectacula sole,
Vela reducuntur, cum venit Hermogenes.[2]

The screens, too, which were placed in front of the spectators, to protect them from the fury of those unchained beasts, were woven of gold:

Auro quoque torta refulgent
Retia.[3]

If there is any thing excusable in such extravagance, it is where the conception and the novelty, not the expense, are the source of admiration.

[1] How often we have seen part of the arena sink, and wild beasts come forth upon it from a cavern forced open in the earth; and often then, from the same dark place, a grove of gilded trees with saffron bark grow up. Nor was it only the monsters of the forest that we saw: I have beheld sea-calves fighting with bears, and beasts like horses, but for their hideous form. — Calpurnius, *Eclogues*, VII, 64.

[2] Though the amphitheatre is hot under an intemperate sun, the awnings are taken in when Hermogenes comes. — Martial, XII, 29.15.

[3] The screens, too, gleam, wrought with gold. — Calpurnius, *Eclogues*, VII, 53.

Even in these vanities we perceive how fertile those past ages were in other wits than ours. It is with this kind of fertility as with all other productions of Nature. This is not to say that she then put forth her supreme effort. (*c*) We do not advance at all, rather we wander and turn about in circles here and there; we retrace our steps. (*b*) I fear that our knowledge is weak in all directions; we see neither far forward nor far backward; it embraces little and lives little, being short both in extent of time and in extent of matter.

Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona
Multi, sed omnes illachrimabiles
Urgentur ignotique longa
Nocte.[1]

Et supera bellum Trojanum et funera Trojæ,
Multi alias alii quoque res cecinere poetæ.[2]

(*c*) And Solon's narrative of what he had learned from the priests of Egypt of the long continuance of their method and manner of learning and preserving the histories of other nations,[3] seems to me a testimony not to be rejected in this regard. *Si interminatam in omnes partes magnitudinem regionum videremus et temporum, in quam se injiciens animus et intendens, ita late longeque peregrinatur ut nullam oram ultimi videat in qua possit insistere; in hac immensitate infinita vis innumerabilium appareret formarum.*[4]

(*b*) If all that has come down to us from the past were true and were known to any one, it would be less than noth-

[1] There lived many brave men before Agamemnon, but they all lie forgotten in darkness, where none can weep for them.—Horace, *Odes*, IV, 9.25.

[2] And before the Theban war and the calamity of Troy, many other poets sang of other deeds. — Lucretius, V, 326. Montaigne reverses the thought of Lucretius by changing *cur* to *et*, and *non* to *multi*. *Trojanum* for *Thebanum* is a manifest slip.

[3] See Plato, *Timæus*.

[4] If we could see the boundless extent of space and of time into which the mind casts itself, and which in its contemplation it traverses far and wide, without finding an ultimate limit on which to rest, in this infinite immensity there would appear an innumerable multitude of forms. — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 20. Montaigne has changed the original text to suit his own thought.

ing compared with what is unknown. And of the present state of the world that is slipping on while we are in it, how trivial and restricted is the knowledge of the most studious! Not only regarding special occurrences, which chance often renders characteristic [1] and important, but regarding the condition of great governments and nations, a hundred-fold more about them escapes us than comes to our knowledge. We exclaim at the miracles of the invention of our artillery, of our printing; other men, at the other side of the world, in China, enjoyed them a thousand years earlier. If we saw as much of the world as we do not see, we should discern, so it is to be believed, a perpetual multiplication and vicissitude of forms. There is nothing single and rare in respect to nature, but there is in respect to our knowledge, which is a wretched foundation for our rules, and which easily offers us an exceeding false image of things. As we to-day idly conclude the downward tendency and decrepitude of the world by arguments which we derive from our own weakness and decadence, —

Jamque adeo affecta est ætas, affectaque tellus,[2] —

so idly did this poet [3] conclude its recent birth and youth from the vigour that he saw in the minds of his time, abounding in various thoughts and inventions of various arts:

Verum, ut opinor, habet novitatem summa, recensque
Natura est mundi, neque pridem exordia cœpit;
Quare etiam quædam nunc artes expoliuntur,
Nunc etiam augescunt, nunc addita navigiis sunt
Multa.[4]

Our world has lately discovered another (and who can assure us that it is the last of its brethren, since the spirits,

[1] *Exemplaires.*

[2] So now our age is corrupted, and the earth is less productive. — Lucretius, II, 1150. Modern texts have *fracta* for *affecta.*

[3] *Cettuy-la;* that is, Lucretius.

[4] Nay, the universe, I think, is new, and the world is fresh, and did not come into being long ago; so some arts are now being perfected, or are now even becoming greater, and many things are now discovered in the art of navigation. — Lucretius, V, 330.

the sibyls, and we ourselves have known nothing of this one until now? [1]), no less large, as fully peopled and fruitful as our world,[2] but so new and so infantine that it is still taught its A B C; it is not fifty years since it knew neither letters nor weights nor measures nor garments nor corn nor vines; it was still a naked baby in arms, and lived solely on what it received from its mother-nurse. If we judge aright of our end, and this poet [3] of the youth of his period, this other world will come into full light when ours is departing therefrom; the universe will be paralysed; one member will be useless, the other in full vigour. I much fear that we shall have greatly hastened its decline and its ruin by our contagion, and that we shall have sold our beliefs and our arts to it very dear. It was an infant world, yet we have not whipped and subdued it to our teaching by the advantage of our worth and native strength, or won its favour by our justice and kindliness, or subjugated it by our magnanimity. The greater part of the answers and of the negotiations entered into with them witness that they are in no wise inferior to us in native clearness of mind and pertinence. The startling magnificence of the cities of Cuzco and of Mexico and, among other like matters, the king's garden in which all the trees and fruits and all the plants, in the same arrangement and size that they have in a garden, were wonderfully fashioned of gold, — as, in his cabinet, were all the animals native to his land and his waters, — and the beauty of their work in precious stones, in feathers, in cotton, and in painting,[4] shew that in craftsmanship also they are in no wise inferior to us.

But as for piety, observance of the laws, kindliness, liberality, loyalty, frankness, it has served us well to have less than they; they were lost by this advantage over us, and sold and betrayed themselves. As for hardiness and courage, as for staunchness, constancy, resolute endurance of pain and of hunger and of death, I should not fear to oppose examples that I could find among them to the most famous ancient examples that we have in the traditions of our world

[1] Cf. Book I, chap. 31 (Vol. I, p. 271).
[2] *Plein et membru que lui.* [3] Lucretius.
[4] See Gomara, *Histoire Générale des Indes*, V, 13.

on this side of the ocean.[1] For, as to those who have subjugated them, take away the strategems and trickery which they made use of to deceive them, and the natural amazement which it brought to the latter nations — to see so unexpectedly the arrival of bearded men different from themselves in language, in religion, in bearing, and in aspect, coming from so distant a part of the world which they had never known to be inhabited at all, mounted on great unfamiliar monsters, opposed to those who had never seen, not only a horse, but any beast whatever trained to carry and support a man or any other burden; furnished with a shining and hard skin and armed with a sharp and glittering weapon, opposed to those who bartered great wealth of gold and pearls for the marvel of the gleam of a mirror or a knife, and who had neither knowledge nor substance by which they could in any length of time pierce our steel; and furthermore to the lightning and thunder of our cannon and harquebuses, capable of dismaying even Cæsar, had he been surprised by them as unprepared as were these, opposed to peoples that were naked except where some weaving of cotton had been invented, without other weapons, for the most part, than bows, stones, clubs, and wooden shields, peoples taken by surprise under colour of friendliness and good faith and by curiosity to see strange and unfamiliar things — take away, I say, from the conquerors this disparity and you take from them the whole occasion of so many victories. When I consider the indomitable ardour with which so many thousands of men, women, and children so often come forward and fling themselves upon inevitable dangers in defence of their gods and of their liberty — this generous obstinacy in enduring all extremities and difficulties, and death, rather than submit to the domination of those by whom they have been so shamefully deceived, some choosing rather, when captured, to pine away from hunger and fasting than to accept food from the hands of their enemies, so basely victorious — I perceive that whosoever should have attacked them on equal terms, of weapons and of experience and of numbers, would have been as much in peril as in any war that we know, and even more so.

[1] All this that follows was inspired by Gomara, *passim*.

Would that so noble a conquest had occurred under Alexander, or under the old Greeks and Romans; and that such a vast change and transformation of so many empires and peoples had fallen into hands which would have gently trimmed and done away with what there was of barbarism and would have encouraged and strengthened the good roots that nature had there implanted, not only introducing in the cultivation of the soil and the adornment of the cities the arts of this part of the world so far as they might have been necessary, but also adding the Greek and Roman virtues to those native to the country! What a reparation to them it would have been, and what an improvement for the whole world, if the first examples of our conduct that we offered to view in those parts had inspired those nations with admiration and imitation of virtue, and had brought about between them and us a fraternal intercourse and understanding. How easy it would have been to make a helpful use [1] of souls so pure, so eager to be taught, having for the most part such admirable inclinations! On the contrary, we made use of their ignorance and inexperience to bend them more easily toward treachery, lust, covetousness, and toward every sort of inhumanity and cruelty, by the example and pattern of our conduct. When was so high a price ever set on the course of trade and traffic? So many cities destroyed, so many nations exterminated, so many millions put to the sword, and the richest and fairest portion of the world turned topsy-turvy to obtain pearls and pepper — victories of commerce! [2] Never did ambition, never did national enmities, impel men to such horrible hostility toward others and to such disastrous calamities.

Some Spaniards, coasting the sea in quest of mines, landed in a fertile and attractive region, thickly inhabited, and made their wonted representations to the people: that they were peaceable folk, coming from far countries, sent by the King of Castile, the greatest prince of the habitable world, to whom the Pope, the representative of God on earth, had given the sovereignty of all the Indies; that, if the people chose to be his tributaries, they would be most

[1] *Faire son profit.* [2] *Mechaniques victoires.*

benignantly treated. They [1] asked for provisions for their sustenance, and gold to use for a certain medicine; furthermore, they urged upon them belief in one God and the truth of our religion, which they advised them to accept, adding to their advice some threats. The reply was this: that, as for being peaceably inclined, they had not the look of it, if they were so; as for their king, since he asked alms, he must be poor and necessitous; and he [2] who had made this allotment to him must be a man who loved dissension, giving to a third person something that was not his to give, thus placing him at odds with the former possessors; as for provisions, those they would supply; as for gold, they had little of it and it was a thing they held in little esteem, inasmuch as it was useless in the service of their life, about which all their care looked solely to passing it happily and pleasantly, but whatever they [3] could find of it, save that which was used in the service of their gods, they might freely take; as for a single God, what had been said had pleased them, but they did not wish to change their religion, having been for so long a time so beneficially helped by it, and that they were wont to take counsel only of their friends and acquaintance; as for the threats, it was a sign of lack of judgement to threaten those whose character and resources were unknown; therefore, let them make haste to vacate the territory forthwith; for they [4] were not accustomed to take in good part the familiarities [5] and admonitions of armed men who were strangers; otherwise (exhibiting to them, without their city, the heads of several men who had been executed), they would treat them as they had these others. This is an example of the childish speech of this infant people. But it is to be observed that neither in this place nor in several others where the Spaniards did not find the articles of value they sought, did they make any stay or enter into any relations, whatever other conveniences there were there; witness my cannibals.[6]

Of the two most powerful kings in that part of the world

[1] The Spaniards. This, too, is taken from Gomara, *ubi supra*.
[2] The Pope.
[3] The Spaniards.
[4] The natives.
[5] *Les honnestetez.*
[6] Referring to the Essay, "Of Cannibals," Book I, chap. 38.

(and perchance in the whole world), kings of so many kings, the last two whom they [1] expelled from this land, one was the King of Peru, who was taken in battle and held for ransom in so exorbitant a sum that it passes all belief; and when this had been loyally paid, and when in intercourse he had given proof of a frank, free, and faithful nature and of a clear and well-ordered understanding, the conquerors (after they had extorted from him one million, three hundred and twenty-five thousand, five hundred weight of gold, besides silver and other things which amounted to no less a sum, so that their horses were thenceforth shod only with solid gold) were desirous still to find out, at whatever cost of faithlessness, what might be the rest of the king's treasures, (*c*) and freely to possess themselves of what he had locked up. (*b*) They brought a false charge and witness against him: that he intended to induce his provinces to rise and restore him to liberty. Whereupon, by the admirable sentence decreed by the very men who had plotted this treachery against him, he was condemned to be publicly hanged and strangled, having been forced to purchase remission from the torture of being burned alive, by the baptism which they gave him in his last hour: a shocking and unheard-of irregularity, which he none the less endured without derogating from himself either in bearing or in speech, with a truly royal demeanour and stateliness. And then, to calm the people, stunned and bewildered by so strange a spectacle, they feigned great grief at his death and appointed a magnificent funeral ceremony.[2]

The other, the King of Mexico,[3] having for a long time defended his besieged city, and having shewn during the siege all that both endurance and perseverance can do, if ever it was shewn by prince and people, and his ill-fortune having delivered him alive into the hands of his enemies on condition that he should be treated as a king,—and nothing was seen in him whilst in prison unbefitting that title,—

[1] The Spaniards.

[2] This account of the King of Peru (Attabalipa) has not been traced directly to any one source. The facts were in the air. The passage following, about the King of Mexico, is derived chiefly, with intentional divergences, from an Italian translation of Gomara's *Life of Cortes*.

[3] Guatemotzin.

they,[1] not having found after this victory all the gold that they had promised themselves, when they had ransacked and rifled everywhere, began to seek information about it by inflicting upon the prisoners whom they held the severest tortures they could devise. But as they gained nothing by this, finding their victims' hearts stronger than their tortures, they at last became so enraged that, contrary to their faith and to every law of nations, they condemned the king himself and one of the chief nobles of his court to be put to the torture in each other's presence. This noble, finding himself overcome by the pain, being surrounded with hot coals, turned his face piteously at last to his master, as if to ask for mercy because he could endure no more. The king, fixing his eyes haughtily and sternly upon him, as in reproof of his cowardice and pusillanimity, said these words only, in a harsh and unfaltering voice: "And I, am I in a cold bath? Am I more comfortable than you?" The other immediately succumbed to the suffering, and so died. The king, half-roasted, was taken thence, not so much from pity (for what pity ever touched souls so inhuman that, for the sake of uncertain information about some vessel of gold to steal, they would have a man broiled before their eyes, to say nothing of his being a king so great both in fortune and in merit), but because his firmness made their cruelty more and more shameful. They hanged him afterward, he having courageously attempted to free himself by his own hand[2] from the long captivity and subjection; and even thus he rendered his end worthy of a high-minded prince.

At another time they caused to be burned, in one and the same fire, four hundred and sixty living men: four hundred of the common people, sixty of the chief nobles of the province, mere prisoners of war.[3] We have these narrations from themselves,[4] for not only do they admit them, they boast of them and proclaim them. Is it as testimony of their justice or of religious zeal? Unquestionably these are methods too contrary and inimical to so holy an end. Had they proposed to themselves to extend our faith, they would have

[1] The Spaniards. [2] *Par armes.*
[3] See Gomara, *Histoire Gênérale des Indes.*
[4] Gomara was a Spaniard.

considered that it is not by the possession of territory that it increases in power, but by the possession of men, and would have been only too well satisfied with the slaughter made necessary by war, without adding thereto likewise a butchery as of wild beasts, as nearly universal as sword and fire could bring to pass, having intentionally preserved from it only so many as they wished to use as unhappy slaves for labour and service in their mines. Consequently, many of the leaders [1] were put to death in the locality that they had conquered, by order of the kings of Castile, justly outraged by the horror of their conduct; and almost all were held in contempt, and hated. God deservedly ordained that this vast booty should be swallowed up by the sea, in transport, or by the intestine wars in which they consumed one another; and the greater number were buried where they died [2] and had no fruit from their victory.

As for the revenue,—even in the hands of a thrifty and prudent prince,[3]—it answers very little to the hopes that were held out about it to his predecessors, and to the first abundant supply of riches which were found in the beginning in these newly discovered lands (for, although much is being drawn therefrom, we see that it is nothing in comparison with what might be expected); this is because the use of coin was entirely unknown there, and consequently their gold was found all in masses, serving no other purpose than for show and parade, as an heirloom descending [4] from father to son through many powerful kings, who were always working their mines to the utmost, in order to make that vast quantity of vessels and statues for the adornment of their palaces and temples; whereas our gold is all used in business and in commerce. We cut it up and change it, circulate it, and disperse it in a thousand ways. Imagine if our kings should thus hoard up for several centuries all the gold that they could lay their hands on and let it lie idle!

The people of the Kingdom of Mexico were somewhat more civilised and more well-informed than the other nations of those lands; so they judged, as we do, that the universe was near its end, and took as a sign of this the desola-

[1] Of the Spaniards.
[2] *Sur les lieux;* that is, in a foreign land.
[3] Philip II.
[4] *Un meuble reservé.*

tion that we brought upon them. They believed that the existence of the world is divided into five ages and into the life of five consecutive suns, of which four had already completed their time; and that the one which then shone upon them was the fifth. The first perished with all the other creatures by a universal flood. The second by the fall of the heavens upon the earth, which stifled every living thing; to which age they assigned the giants, and they shewed the Spaniards bones, according to the proportion of which the stature of men reached twenty palms. The third, by fire, which burned and consumed all things. The fourth, by a tumult of air and wind which cast down even many mountains; human beings did not die, but men were changed to apes (what impressions does not the foolishness of human belief receive!). After the death of this fourth sun the world was in unbroken darkness for twenty-five years, in the fifteenth year of which were created a man and a woman who renewed the human race. Ten years later, on a certain day, the sun appeared, newly created, and since then the numbering of their years begins from that day. On the third day after the creation of the sun, the ancient gods died; the new ones were born after that, from day to day.[1] My authority learned nothing of what they think of the manner in which this last sun will perish; but their reckoning of this fourth change falls in with that great conjunction of the planets which caused, some eight hundred and odd years ago, as the astrologers calculate, many great alterations and new conditions in the world.

As to pomp and magnificence, by which path I entered into this subject, neither Greece, nor Rome, nor Egypt can compare, whether in usefulness or difficulty or nobleness, any of its public works to the road which is seen in Peru, built by the kings of the country, from the City of Quito to that of Cusco, — three hundred leagues, — straight, level, twenty-five paces wide, paved, enclosed on one and the other side by beautiful and high walls; and all along these walls, on the inner side, two never-failing streams bordered by fine trees which they call *molly*. Where they met with mountains and rocks, they cut and levelled them, and filled the

[1] See Gomara, *Histoire Gênêrale des Indes*.

hollows with stone and lime. At every limit of a day's journey there are fine palaces supplied with provisions, garments, and weapons, as well for travellers as for the armies which have to pass that way. In estimating this work I have taken into account the difficulty of it, which is especially considerable in that region. They did not build with stones smaller than ten feet square; they had no other means of transportation than dragging their load by strength of arm; and had not even the art of scaffolding, knowing in its stead no other way than to pile earth against the building as it rose, and take it away afterward.[1]

Let us return to our coaches. In place of them and of any other vehicle, these people had themselves carried on men's shoulders. The last King of Peru, the day he was captured, was thus borne among his troops, seated in a chair of gold. As fast as they killed his bearers in order to make him fall to the ground (for they wished to take him alive), as many others immediately took the places of the dead, so that he could not be cast down, whatever the slaughter of those men, until a horseman seized hold of his body and threw him to the earth.[2]

CHAPTER VII

OF THE DISADVANTAGE OF GREATNESS

THIS Essay might be entitled an Apology for Kings and Princes — for the unfortunate great. Montaigne's wide sympathies included poor peasants and poor princes in his compassion, and he saw the definitions of one and the other plane of human existence.

So it seemed to him that it was not a great sign of magnanimity to despise grandeur, no great wonder to refuse it; and he shrewdly suggests that the very glory of the refusal is a reward of ambition.

As for himself, he "cares too much for himself" to wish for a lofty position. He would like an increase in mental and physical qualities and in wealth, but not in power: he would rather be in the third place than the first, if they were both in Paris; he measures good luck, not by its might, but by its ease. He may admire Regulus more than Balbus, but he would rather be Balbus.

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[1] See Gomara, *Histoire Générale des Indes.* [2] See *Ibid.*

And, to come back to earthly greatness, the most difficult part in the world to play well is that of king. So unbounded a power it is difficult to keep in bounds; yet there is a peculiar incitement to virtue in being in a situation where every good act affects so many men, and where (like preachers) you are chiefly judged by the unexacting, easily deceived, easily pleased common people. But this whole subject is one of those on which our interests make it difficult to pass sincere judgement; so let inflexible and impassible reason tell us what are the disadvantages of greatness.

First, that, out of respect, princes are treated disrespectfully: no man will fight against them; it is only their horses, not their fellows, that afford them an opportunity to shew their abilities in mastering opposition. They are never allowed the honour and pleasure of hazardous deeds; every thing gives way before them, as if by enchantment; they are kept aloof from their kind; their existence is not of life, but of sleep. The power and wealth of man lie in want.

Princes are deprived of all true praise; for the quality of kingship stifles the expression of all virtues that are not directly concerned with this office. A king can be nothing but a king, and his personality is wholly obscured by the light of his crown. His vices are fostered, not merely by approbation, but by imitation.

And, in fine, to be not on a level with other men is to be at a disadvantage as regards success.

SINCE we can not attain it, let us avenge ourselves by speaking ill of it. Yet it is not altogether speaking ill of a thing to discover defects in it; there are some in all things, however admirable and desirable they may be. Generally speaking, greatness has this manifest advantage, that she can descend from her heights when she pleases; and she well-nigh has her choice between the two conditions: for it is not from all heights that a man falls; from most he can descend without falling.[1] It seems to me in truth that we place too high a value on greatness, and that we also over-value the determination of those whom we have seen or heard of as having despised it or as having renounced it intentionally. Its essential quality is not so distinctly of value that we can not without a miracle refuse it. I hold the endurance of ills to be a very difficult effort, but I hold that contentment with a moderate degree of fortune and the absence[2] of greatness is a small matter. That is a virtue, it seems to me, to which I, who am but a green goose, might attain without much struggle. What is to

[1] Cf. Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Animi*, X. [2] *Fuite.*

be said of those [1] who might also take into consideration the glory that accompanied this rejection, in which perchance there may be more ambition than in the desire itself and the enjoyment of greatness; inasmuch as ambition never conducts itself more in accordance with nature than by an out-of-the-way and unfrequented path?

I strengthen my heart in respect to patience, I weaken it in respect to desire. I have as much to wish for as another, and I allow my wishes as much liberty and indiscretion; but yet it has never happened to me to desire either imperial or royal power,[2] or the preëminence of high and commanding station. I do not aim thereat; I love myself too much. When I think of becoming greater, it would be in a humble way, by an increase in resolution, in good sense, in health, in beauty, and in wealth also — an involuntary and unpretending growth suitable for me. But a great reputation, a powerful authority, oppresses my imagination; and, just the opposite of that other,[3] I should peradventure like better to be second or third in Périgueux than first at Paris; [4] or at least, quite truly third rather than first in office at Paris. I do not desire either to wrangle with an usher as an unrecognised nobody, or to have the throng through which I may pass open to do me honour. I am adapted to a middle station, as by my fate, so by my taste; (*c*) and I have shown in the conduct of my life and of my undertakings that I have rather avoided than otherwise climbing higher than the degree of fortune in which God placed my birth. All natural appointment [5] is equally just and easy.

(*b*) I have so indolent a soul that I do not measure good-fortune by its height, I measure it by its facility. (*c*) But

[1] *Que doivent faire ceux*, etc.

[2] Cf. Book I, chap. 42 (Vol. I, p. 347, *supra*): *Quant au commander, qui semble estre si doux, considerant l'imbecillité du jugement humain et la difficulté du chois ès choses nouvelles et doubteuses, je suis fort de cet advis, qu'il est bien plus aisé et plus plaisant de suivre que de guider, et que c'est un grand sejour d'esprit de n'avoir à tenir qu'une voie tracée et à respondre que de soy.*

[3] Cæsar. See Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar*, and *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.

[4] This sentiment is inscribed on a monument erected to Montaigne at Périgueux.

[5] *Constitution.*

if my heart is not great enough, it is proportionably a frank one, and bids me boldly publish its weakness. Should some one propose to me to compare the life of L. Thorius Balbus, — a brave, handsome, learned and healthy man, who was familiar with, and abounding in, all kinds of advantages and pleasures, passing tranquil days of which he was absolute master,[1] his soul well fortified against death, superstition, sufferings, and other afflictions incident to humanity; dying finally in battle, arms in hand, in defence of his country, — if, I say, it were proposed to compare his life with the life of M. Regulus, great and lofty, as every one knows, and his admirable end, the one life nameless and unhonoured, the other extraordinarily conspicuous and glorious, I should certainly say of them what Cicero says of them,[2] could I express myself as well as he. But were I obliged to write of them in relation to my own life,[3] I should add that the first is as much according to my scope, and my desire, which I conform to my scope, as the second is far beyond it; that I can touch the one only through veneration, while I would willingly touch the other through familiarity.

Let us return to our temporal greatness, from which we have digressed.

(*b*) I greatly dislike control, whether active or passive. (*c*) Otanez, one of the seven who had a lawful claim to the kingdom of Persia, took a course which I would readily have taken: he relinquished in favour of his competitors his right to be raised to the throne by election or by lot, provided that he and his might live in that realm free from all subjection and control save that of the ancient laws, and might enjoy all liberty that would not be prejudicial to those laws, being as intolerant of ruling as of being ruled.[4]

(*b*) The most unpleasant and the most difficult profession in the world, in my opinion, is to act worthily the part of king. I excuse more of their shortcomings than people commonly do, in consideration of the terrible burden of

[1] *Conduisant une vie tranquille et toute sienne.*

[2] In *De Fin.*, II, 20, where he compares the two men greatly to the advantage of Regulus.

[3] *Mais s'il me les falloit coucher sur la mienne.*

[4] See Herodotus, III, 83.

their office, which astounds me. It is difficult to keep within bounds, with such unbounded power; yet the fact is that, even for those who are least excellent by nature, there is a special incitement to virtue in being placed in a position where your every good act is registered and reported, and where the least well-doing affects so many persons, and where your faculties, like those of preachers, are used chiefly for the common people, a judge far from exacting, easily deceived, easily satisfied. There are few things about which we could give a sincere judgement, because there are few in which we have not, in one way or another, a private interest. Superiority and inferiority, control and subjection, are bound to innate rivalry and contestation; they must needs perpetually encroach on one another.[1] I believe neither the one nor the other concerning the rights of his associate; let us leave it to reason, which is inflexible and impassive, to pronounce upon this when we can have recourse to it. Not a month ago I was turning the leaves of two Scotch books [2] which are at odds on this subject: the one [3] on the side of the people makes the king to be of lower station than a carter; the one on the side of monarchy sets him some degrees above God in power and sovereignty.

Now the disadvantage of greatness, which I have undertaken to comment on here because of a certain occurrence which lately brought it to my mind, is this: there is, peradventure, nothing more delightful in human intercourse than the contests that we engage in against one another, from rivalry in honour and prowess, whether in exercises of the body or of the mind, in which sovereign greatness has no part. In truth, it has often seemed to me that by force of respect we treat princes scornfully and insultingly; for the thing which infinitely offended me in my youth — that they who competed with me forbore exerting themselves in good earnest, because they found me unworthy of their full strength — that is what we see happen to them [4] every day, every one finding himself unworthy to put forth his full

[1] *Il faut qu'elles s'entrepillent perpetuellement.*

[2] G. Buchanan, *De jure regni apud Scotos* (1579), and A. Blackwood's reply: *Pro Regibus Apologia* (1581).

[3] Buchanan's.

[4] That is, to princes.

strength against them. If it is perceived that they have ever so little desire for victory, there is no man who does not labour to give it to them, and who does not prefer to be faithless to his own fame rather than to injure theirs; only so much effort is used as is necessary for their honour. What share have they in the mellay when every one is on their side? I seem to see those paladins of old days appearing in tournaments and combats, with their bodies and armour protected by enchantments. Brisson, running a race against Alexander, hung behind;[1] Alexander reproved him for it, but he should have had him whipped. In this connection Carneades said that the children of princes learn nothing rightly except to manage horses, inasmuch as in all other doings every one yields to them and owns himself beaten; but a horse, which is neither a flatterer nor a courtier, throws the king's son to the ground as he would the son of a porter.[2]

Homer was forced to agree that Venus, a divinity so gentle and so delicate, should be wounded at the siege of Troy, in order to show her courage and daring, qualities which in no wise belong to those who are exempt from danger. The gods are represented as angry, afraid, running away, jealous of one another, grieving, impatient, in order to do them honour by endowing them with the virtues which for us are founded upon these imperfections. He who does not participate in the hazard and difficulty can claim no share of the honour and pleasure that follow hazardous deeds. It is a misfortune to be so powerful that all things must needs give way to you. Your high fortune puts society and companionship too far from you; it places you in solitude.[3] This ease and meaningless facility in making every thing bend beneath one is a foe to every sort of pleasure; this is sliding, not walking; sleeping, not living. Conceive man invested with omnipotence — you cast him into unknown depths; he must beg you, as alms, for opposition and resistance; his very being and his welfare depend upon indigence.

The good qualities[4] are as if dead and hidden, for these are perceived only by comparison and they are outside that;

[1] See Plutarch, *Of the tranquillity of the mind.*
[2] See Idem, *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend.*
[3] *Elle vous plante trop à l'escart.* [4] Those of princes.

they have little knowledge of true praise, being exposed to such continuous and uniform approbation. If they have to deal with the dullest of their subjects, they have no means of gaining an advantage over him; by saying, "It is because he is my king," it seems to him [1] that he has said clearly enough that he has lent a helping hand in being overmastered. This quality [2] stifles and swallows up all the other real and essential qualities; those are buried in the royalty, and it allows them [3] to show their worth only by the actions which are immediately connected with their rank and which are of avail in it — the duties of their office; it is so much to be king that they can be nothing else.[4] The peculiar glamour that surrounds a king conceals him and secretes him from us; our sight is dimmed and bewildered by it, being dazzled and stayed [5] by that strong light. The Senate awarded the prize for eloquence to Tiberius; he declined it, thinking that he could not be benefitted by a judgement so far from free, even were it sincere.[6]

As we concede to them all advantages of honour, so do we encourage and justify their defects and vices, not only by approval but also by imitation. All Alexander's courtiers carried their heads on one side as he did; and the sycophants of Dionysius knocked against each other in his presence, and stumbled over and upset what came under their feet, to imply that they were as short-sighted as he.[7] Ruptures also have sometimes served as recommendation to favour. I have seen deafness affected; and Plutarch saw courtiers, because their master hated his wife, repudiate theirs whom they loved.[8] What is more, lechery has been known to be thought well of, and all sorts of dissoluteness, as well as disloyalty, blasphemy, cruelty, and heresy, and superstition, irreligion, laxity, and worse, if worse there be; following a course even much more dangerous than that

[1] To the subject.
[2] The royal position.
[3] Princes.
[4] *Qu'il n'est que par là.*
[5] *Nostre veue s'y rompt et s'y dissipe, estant remplie et arrestée.*
[6] Cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, II, 84. If this is Montaigne's source, his memory was very inexact.
[7] See Plutarch, *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend.*
[8] See *Ibid.* But Plutarch said simply that he had seen *one man* do it.

of the sycophants of Mithridates, who, because their master laid claim to the distinction of being a good physician, allowed him to cut and cauterise their limbs;[1] for these others allow their souls, a more delicate and more noble part, to be cauterised.

But, to end where I began, the Emperor Hadrian discussing with Favorinus the philosopher about the meaning of some word, Favorinus very soon gave him the victory. When his friends remonstrated with him, "You are jesting," he said; "would you have it that he, who commands thirty legions, does not know more than I do?"[2] Augustus wrote verses against Asinius Pollio; "And I," said Pollio, "am silent; it is not wise to write in competition with him who can proscribe." And they were right; for Dionysius, because he could not equal Philoxenus in poetry and Plato in argument, condemned one of them to the quarries and sent the other to be sold as a slave in the island of Ægina.[3]

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE ART OF CONVERSATION[4]

This Essay does not teach the art of *conversation*, but rather the art of conversing with our fellow men, of holding converse with them, whether by oral speech or visible speech. As the conclusion of the Essay, we have a criticism of the writings of Tacitus, which might better, perhaps, have had a title to itself.

The opening pages have nothing to do with *conference* of any kind, save that Montaigne declares that he *confers* the knowledge of himself on the world through his Essays so that worthy men — *des honnestes hommes* — may profit by avoiding his imperfections.

When he begins his remarks on *la conference*, he does of course mean actual *speaking*, face-to-face talking, — more exactly, discussing, — and the delightful impression he gives of himself as a talker is scarcely

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[1] See Plutarch, *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend.*

[2] Montaigne took this story from Spartianus (*Life of Hadrian*, XV) through Crinitus, *De Honesta Disciplina*, XII; and that of Pollio from Macrobius (*Saturnalia*, II, 4) also through the same passage of Crinitus.

[3] See Plutarch, *Of the tranquillity of the mind.* But see Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato*, and Diodorus Siculus, XV, 6 and 7, for a different explanation of Dionysius's treatment of Plato.

[4] *De l'art de conferer.*

impaired by his honest confession, on a later page, of his disagreeablenesses.

He indulges in a rather perilous paradox when he declares: "One does not do wrong to the subject when one forsakes it to find the best manner of treating it"; but we may believe that he meant only that good sense in the mode of discussing a subject is not less important than good sense in forming one's private opinion. And what he says regarding the learned follies in the manner of conducting public discussions in his day shows how widespread was the evil he condemned.

As he goes on to point out the true ends and objects of discussion, he naturally passes from that "questing" of truth which we make in company with our antagonist, to the solitary pursuit of it which is recorded on the printed page: and his turn of thought finds expression in the sentence which sounds more like the to-morrow of to-day than the long-ago yesterday of the sixteenth century. "I constantly take pleasure in reading authors without concerning myself about their knowledge, having regard to their manner, not their subject."

Montaigne did not believe that any man ever had captured, ever would, ever could capture the truth: but to *chase* it — ah! there is the pleasure! but it must be done intelligently, however eagerly.

There is something extremely interesting in Montaigne's annoyance at the lack of intelligence, the *sottise*, that he came in contact with, and in his self-reproaches for this *fadaise* of his. And these self-reproaches lead him to wise thoughts regarding the relation there should be in our minds between our own weaknesses and those of others. "The sum of it is," he says, "that we must live with the living."

Then there comes a break in the Essay — not in the thought, but in the current of the expression: so little of a break in the thought that it merely gives me the impression that Montaigne perhaps here laid down his pen, or that his secretary, to whom he was dictating, went out of the room, and that he, walking back and forth in his library, thinking of what he was about to say, got the last part of the idea too completely in his mind, and when he began again, started off at once with "The senses are our fit and primal judges," when he ought to have begun with "In intercourse, gravity of manner and a professional robe often have weight."

He did not better the arrangement by inserting in 1595 the long preceding passage. He illustrated here, as elsewhere, in a droll enough manner, his own remark: "Every man can speak with truth, but to speak with order, with prudence, with ability, few men have the power!"

Well, after we have got past the senses, and the gowns, and the gravity, and all the superficial appearances and ceremonies, the thought of the tyranny that these exercise keeps Montaigne's mind still dwelling on the frequent incongruity between the position a man occupies and what the man himself is; and from that he passes to the consideration of luck and ill-luck, returning to the contemplation of "a man promoted in dignity." He expresses his own divergence from popular judgements

in a passage of admirable acuteness and pointedness; the conclusion of which, bringing us fully, perfectly, back to methods of discussion, shews how completely that undercurrent runs through all the previous pages.

And now we really do find sane "admonitions" — what might be called maxims — about social intercourse, of which we, like Montaigne himself, may make *grand usage*. First, about fine-sounding phrases, and vague phrases — do not let them pass current too easily; on the other hand, when what is meant is foolish, do not try to "set right ignorance or stupidity." He speaks then of personal jests, of friends "rallying," "making fun" of one another; and these, which he enjoys, remind him of *jeux de main* (practical jokes?), which he hates.

And now he pauses again, and begins to consider by what, besides his demeanour *en conference*, he judges of a man. "I ask him (in my own mind)," he says, "how contented with himself he is"; and this thought makes him want to tell us what he himself thinks of his Essay, and he declares that he does not know what to think; but, anyway, he is sure that the most famous books do not always do much honour to their authors; so, *fame* is not the only thing to consider. And some of the best things that authors say are not always, he has observed, original with them. ("Other writers," he seems to say between the lines, "borrow a good deal, as well as myself.") But this makes conversation about books, the discussion of books, awkward for persons who are not very well read, for they can not be sure whose *belle invention* they are praising. So I, Michel de Montaigne, am always on my guard about that!

He continues: "I have been reading Tacitus lately, because I had been talking about him with a friend of mine; and do not you, my reader, agree with me that," etc. The sentences which break this criticism — "I dare speak not only of myself," to the end of the paragraph — were added in 1595.

The sentences on the last page are just a flourish — his *signature*.

IT is a habit of our jurisdiction to condemn some persons for wrong-doing only as a warning to others. (*c*) To condemn them because they have erred would be folly, as Plato says;[1] for what is done can not be undone; it is, therefore, to the end that they may not again err in the same way, or that the example of their offence may be shunned. (*b*) We do not reform the man whom we hang: we reform others through him. What I do is of like character. My errors have become a part of my nature and incorrigible; but the public good that excellent men do by causing themselves to be imitated I shall do, perchance, by causing my example to be avoided.

[1] See the *Laws*, book XI.

Nonne vides Albi ut male vivat filius, utque
Barrus inops? Magnum documentum ne patriam rem
Perdere quis velit.[1]

As I publish and disclose my imperfections, some one may learn to fear them.[2] The qualities in myself which I value most derive more honour from my informing against myself than from my speaking well of myself; that is why I so frequently fall into this strain and remain in it. But when all is said, a man never talks of himself without loss: his own blame is always credited, his praise discredited. There may be some persons of my nature who learn more by contrariety than by conformity, and by avoidance than by following.[3] It was this sort of teaching that the elder Cato had in mind when he said that wise men have more to learn from fools than fools from wise men;[4] and that ancient player on the lyre, who, Pausanias reported, was in the habit of compelling his pupils to go to hear a bad player who lived opposite him, where they learned to detest his discords and false modulations. Horror of cruelty impels me more toward clemency than any pattern of clemency could attract me. A skilful horseman does not correct my seat so much as does an attorney or a Venetian on horseback; and a bad fashion of language improves mine more than a good one. Every day another's foolish behaviour admonishes me and counsels me; what stings touches and arouses better than what pleases. In these days it would be well for us to amend our ways by going backward, by disagreement rather than by agreement, by difference rather than by accord. Having learned little of what is good by examples, I make use of examples of what is bad, which lesson is common enough; the common spectacle of theft and perfidy has regulated and restrained my morals. (*c*) I have endeavoured to make myself as agreeable as I saw others to be tedious; as firm as

[1] Do you not see what an evil life the son of Albus lives, and how needy Barrus is? They are a great lesson, to warn us against squandering a patrimony. — Horace, *Satires*, I, 4.109.

[2] That is, to fear similar ones in himself.

[3] *Par fuite que par suite.*

[4] See Plutarch, *Life of Cato Censor.* — "Where did you learn your good manners?" "Of the bad-mannered." — Saadi.

I saw others to be weak; as gentle as I saw others to be hard; as kind as I saw others to be unkind; but I proposed to myself unattainable standards.

(*b*) The most fruitful and natural exercise of our minds is, in my opinion, conversation. I find the habit of it pleasanter than any other action of our lives; and that is why, if I were at this hour compelled to choose, I would consent, I do believe, to lose my sight rather than hearing or speech. The Athenians and the Romans also held the practice of this art in high esteem in their academies. In our day the Italians retained some traces of this, to their great advantage, as may be seen by comparing our wits with theirs. The study of books is a languid and feeble process, which has no warmth; whereas conversation teaches and exercises at one stroke. If I converse with a powerful thinker and a sturdy fighter, he presses me close, touches me to the quick on the left and the right; his conceptions stimulate mine. Rivalry, vanity, the struggle, urge me on and raise me above myself; and accordance is an altogether irksome quality in conversation.

But just as our mind is strengthened by communication with vigorous and well-regulated minds, it is not to be said how much it loses and is debased by the constant intercourse and association that we have with low and weak minds. There is no contagion which spreads as that does; I know by ample experience what its price is by the ell. I like to dispute and to discuss, but with few men at a time, and for my own pleasure; for to serve in emulation as a spectacle for the great and to make a show of one's wit and one's prating,[1] I consider that to be an affair very unbeseeming a man of honour. Stupidity is a poor quality; but to be unable to endure it and to be wroth with it and chafe at it, as happens to me, is another sort of weakness, which is not far behind stupidity in unsuitableness;[2] and it is of that I am ready now to accuse myself.

I enter into conversation and discussion with great freedom and facility, forasmuch as dogmatic opinion finds in me a soil ill suited for it to penetrate and send forth deep roots; no propositions astound me, no belief offends me, however

[1] *Son caquet.* [2] *Qui ne doit guere à la sottise en importunité.*

contrary it may be to my own. There is no fantastic idea so idle and extravagant that it does not seem to me a fitting production of the human mind. Those of us who deny to our own judgement the right of final decisions look leniently on differing beliefs, and if we do not give acceptance to them, we readily give them hearing. Where one scale of the balance is altogether empty, I let the other vacillate under an old woman's dreams; and it seems to me excusable if I accept an odd number by preference; Thursday rather than Friday; if I like better to be the twelfth or fourteenth at table than the thirteenth; if I more willingly see a hare running beside my path than crossing it when I travel, and put out my left foot before my right to be shod. All such idle fancies which have standing among us deserve at least to be listened to; for my part, they outbalance only emptiness, but they do outbalance that. Also, common and uncertain beliefs are in their nature of more weight than nonentity; and he who does not let himself go so far in regard to them falls perchance into the fault of opinionativeness while avoiding that of superstition. Opposing opinions consequently neither offend me nor change me; they merely arouse and exercise my mind. We evade correction; we ought to offer and present ourselves to it, especially when it comes in the shape of discussion, not of instruction.[1] At any opposition, we do not consider whether it is just, but how, wrongly or rightly, we can extricate ourselves from it; instead of opening our arms to it, we open our claws. I could well endure being roughly handled by my friends: "You 're a fool, you 're dreaming." Among men of worth I like to have every one express himself fearlessly, to have the words keep company with the thought. We should strengthen our hearing and harden it against this pleasure in the punctilious sound of words.[2] I like a strong and virile companionship and intimacy, a friendship which takes pride in the asperity and vigour of its intercourse, comme l'amour es morsures et esgratigneures sanglantes. (*c*) It is not vigorous and free enough if it is not quarrelsome, if it is tame and artificial, if

[1] *Rejance = regence.*

[2] *Cette tendreur du son ceremonieux des parolles.*

it fears conflict and is constrained in its ways; *neque enim disputari sine reprehensione potest.*[1]

(*b*) When I am opposed, my attention is aroused, not my anger; I go to meet him who contradicts me, who instructs me. The cause of truth should be the common cause for him and for me. How does he reply? The passion of anger has already overmastered his judgement; confusion has taken possession of it in advance of reason. It would be of use if the decision of our disputes were settled by wager; if there were a material note of our losses, so that we could keep a record of them, and that my secretary could say to me, "You paid last year a hundred pounds for being a score of times ignorant and opinionated."

I do honour to truth, and embrace it, in whosesoever hand I find it, and cheerfully surrender myself to it, and hold out to it my vanquished weapons from afar, as I see it approaching. (*c*) And provided it be not done with a too imperiously authoritative air, I take pleasure in being reprehended; and I often agree with my accusers, more because of courtesy than because of reformation, liking to gratify and foster freedom in warning me by facility in yielding, even at my own expense. It is, however, difficult to lead men of my time to this. They have not the courage to correct, because they have not the courage to bear being corrected; and in each other's presence they never speak openly. I take such great pleasure in being judged and known that it is, as it were, indifferent to me in which of the two ways it may be. My intelligence [2] so frequently contradicts and condemns itself that it is all one to me that another does it, especially seeing that I give his reprehension only what authority I like; but I fall out [3] with him who carries himself in so surly a fashion as some one whom I know, who grudges his warning if it be not believed and takes it as an affront if you hesitate about following it. That Socrates always smilingly welcomed the contradictions opposed to his reasoning was due, it might be said, to his strength, and that, since the advantage was certain to be on his side, he accepted them as

[1] For there can be no discussion without contradiction. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, I, 8.

[2] *Mon imagination.* [3] *Mais je romps paille.*

matter for a new victory. Still we see, on the other hand, that there is nothing which makes our perception so sensitive as a belief in the preëminence of our adversary and of his scorn for us; and that consequently it is for the weaker to accept thankfully these oppositions, which set him right and correct him. (*b*) And truly I seek rather the company of those who buffet me than of those who are afraid of me. It is an insipid and harmful pleasure to have to do with people who admire us and give place to us. Antisthenes bade his children never to regard with gratitude or favour the man who praised them.[1] I feel much prouder of the victory that I gain over myself when, in the very heat of the conflict, I make myself bow to the strength of my adversary's argument, than I am pleased with myself for the victory I gain over him from his weakness.

Finally, I receive and acknowledge all sorts of attacks that are well aimed, however feeble they may be; but I am (*c*) much too (*b*) intolerant of those that are given at random.[2] I care little what the subject is, and to me all opinions are the same; and victory in the matter is almost unimportant to me. I can argue peaceably a whole day, if the discussion is conducted in orderly fashion. (*c*) It is not so much force and subtlety that I demand as order, the order that may be seen any day in the wranglings of shepherds and 'prentices,[3] never among ourselves. If they leave the straight path, they do it to be rude, and so indeed do we; but their brawling and impatience does not make them forgo their subject: their argument follows its course. If they interrupt each other, if they do not stay for each other, at least they understand each other. He always answers more than he needs for me who answers what I say. (*b*) But when the discussion is confused and disorderly, I forsake the matter and fasten upon the manner, with vexation and rashness, and throw myself into a testy, malicious, and domineering style of disputation for which I have later to blush.

(*c*) It is impossible to deal in good faith with a fool. Not my judgement alone is vitiated by the control of so impet-

[1] See Plutarch, *Of False Shame.*
[2] *Qui se donnent sans forme.*
[3] *Enfans de boutique.*

uous a master, but my conscience likewise. Our disputes should be prohibited and punished like other verbal crimes. What vice do they not arouse and multiply, they being always ruled and directed by anger! We quarrel, first with the reasonings, then with the men. We learn in discussing only to contradict, and, every one contradicting and being contradicted, it comes about that the result of the discussion is to destroy and annihilate truth. Therefore Plato, in his *Republic*, forbids this exercise of unskilful and ill-bred minds.[1]

(*b*) To what purpose do you set about seeking (*c*) that which is,[2] (*b*) from him who has neither pace nor procedure that is of worth? One does not wrong the subject when one forsakes it to find the method of treating it; I do not mean the scholastic and artificial method, I mean the natural method of a sound intelligence. What will be the end of this? One goes east, the other west; they lose the chief thing and disperse it in the throng of by-matters. After an hour's storming, they know not what they are seeking; one is below, another above, another at the side; this one fastens on a word or a simile; that one no longer hears the objections made to him, so intent is he upon his course, and thinking of following himself, not of you; another, finding himself lacking in strength,[3] fears every thing, refuses every thing, and from the beginning mixes up (*c*) and confuses the subject; or, at the height of the discussion, becomes sulkily silent,[4] from peevish ignorance, affecting a proud contempt or a foolishly modest avoidance of disputation. (*b*) For another man, provided he gives a blow, it matters not to him how much he exposes himself. This other counts his words and weighs them as arguments; that one makes use only of his advantage in the matter of voice and lungs. Here is one who decides against himself, and another who deafens you with useless prefaces and digressions. (*c*) This other arms himself with undisguised insults and seeks an idle altercation [5] to rid himself of the society and conversa-

[1] In Book VII, near the end.
[2] *Quester ce qui est.* In 1588: *quester la verité.*
[3] *Foible de reins.* [4] *Se mutine à se faire tout plat.*
[5] *Une querelle d'Alemaigne.*

tion of a mind that presses him hard. (*b*) This last one sees nothing in argument, but holds you beleaguered with the logical enclosure of his propositions [1] and the formulas of his art.

Now, who does not distrust the sciences, and who is not in doubt whether he can derive from them any substantial profits for the needs of life, in view of the use that we make of them, (*c*) *nihil sanantibus litteris*? [2] (*b*) Who has acquired intelligence by logic? Where are its fine promises? (*c*) *Nec ad melius vivendum nec ad commodius disserendum.*[3] (*b*) Do we find more confused jumbling of things in the gabbling of fish wives [4] than in the public debate of men of this profession? I had rather that my son should learn to talk in taverns than in the school of elocution. Take a master of arts, converse with him; why does he not make us feel this excellence of art, and why does he not enrapture women and such ignorant folk as we are with admiration of the solidity of his reasoning, of the beauty of his method? Why does he not sway us and persuade us as he will? Why does a man so advantaged in matter and in management mingle with his fencing, insults and indiscretion and passion? If he drops off his cap, his gown, and his Latin; if he does not batter our ears with Aristotle pure and crude, you will take him for one of us, or worse. It seems to me that by this complication and entanglement of language with which they press upon us it is as with jugglers: their dexterity contends with our senses and masters them; but it in no wise shakes our faith; beyond this legerdemain they do nothing that is not commonplace and worthless. For, being more learned, they are no less foolish.

I love and honour knowledge as much as they do who possess it; and properly used it is the noblest and most potent acquisition of man. But in those (and their number is infinite) who base thereon their fundamental competence and worth, who rely for their intelligence upon their mem-

[1] *Sur la closture dialectique de ses clauses.*

[2] Of the learning that cures nothing. — Seneca, *Epistle* 59.

[3] Neither for living better, nor for arguing more profitably. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, I, 19.

[4] *Voit-on plus de barbouillage au caquet des harengeres.*

ory, (*c*) *sub aliena umbra latentes*,[1] (*b*) and can do nothing but out of a book, I hate it, if I dare say so, a little more than stupidity. In my country and in my day scholarship fills purses enough, but minds not at all. If it finds them dull, it oppresses and suffocates them, a crude, undigested mass; if it finds them easily acted upon,[2] it purges and refines and subtilises them, even to exinanition. It is a thing of one and another quality almost indifferently; a very useful accessory to a well-endowed mind, pernicious and harmful to another mind; or, it may be said, a thing of very valuable use which does not allow itself to be acquired at a low price; [3] in some hands it is a sceptre, in others a fool's bauble.

But let us proceed. What greater victory do you expect than to teach your enemy that he can not withstand you? When you gain the advantage by that which you propound, it is truth that gains it; when you gain the advantage by method and handling, it is you who gain it. (*c*) It is my opinion that Socrates, in Plato and in Xenophon, debates more for the sake of the disputants than for the sake of the debate, and to teach Euthydemus and Protagoras [4] to perceive their own irrelevancy rather than the irrelevancy of their art. He takes hold of the first matter at hand, as one who has a more useful purpose than to make it clear — to wit, to clear the minds that he undertakes to train and exercise. (*b*) The real object of our hunting is excitement and the hunt itself; we have no excuse for conducting it badly and irrelevantly. To fail in capturing any thing is another matter, for we are destined from birth to quest the truth; to possess it belongs to a greater power. It is not, as Democritus said, hidden in the depths of abysses, but rather elevated to an infinite height in the divine knowledge.[5] (*c*) The world is but a school of inquisition. (*b*) It matters not who hits the ring,[6] but who makes the best

[1] Hiding under the protection of others. — Seneca, *Epistle* 33.

[2] *Desliées.*

[3] Cf. Book I, chap. 26 (Vol. I, p. 200): "Learning is a noble adornment, madame, and a marvellously useful tool. . . . In fact, it is of no true use in mean and low hands."

[4] In the dialogues bearing the names of those two philosophers.

[5] See Lactantius, *Institutiones Divinæ*, III, 28.

[6] *Ce n'est pas à qui mettra dedans.*

running. He who says what is true can be as foolish as he who says what is false; for we are upon the manner, not the matter, of what is said. My inclination is to consider the form as much as the substance, the advocate as much as the cause, as Alcibiades declared should be done. (*c*) And every day I entertain myself by reading authors, without thought about their learning, enquiring after their style, not their subject. Just as I seek intercourse with some famous wit, not to the end that he may teach me, but to the end that I may know him, and that, knowing him, I may, if he be worth it, imitate him. (*b*) Every man can speak truthfully; but to speak methodically, prudently, and ably — that few men can do. Therefore it is not the mistake that comes from ignorance that offends me, but ineptitude. I have broken off many bargains which were profitable to me because of the irrelevancy of the haggling of those with whom I was bargaining. I am not irritated once in a year by the shortcomings of those over whom I have authority; but from the stupidity and obstinacy of their asinine and clumsy assertions, excuses, and justifications we are by the ears together[1] every day. They understand neither what is said nor why it is said, and reply in that fashion; it is a hopeless business. I do not feel my head hit hard except by another head, and I compromise with the vices of my servants more readily than with their hastiness and importunity and their folly. Let them be less active, provided they are capable of activity; you live in hopes of kindling their will, but from a log there is nothing either to hope for or to be had that is worth any thing. But now, suppose I take things as other than they are? This may be; and therefore I find fault with my impatience and I consider, in the first place, that this is equally erroneous in him who is in the right and in him who is in the wrong; for it is always a tyrannical sourness of spirit to be unable to endure a way of thinking different from one's own; and further, that there is in truth no greater and more persistent folly than to be disturbed and nettled by follies of the world, or one more anomalous, for it irritates us chiefly

[1] *A nous en prendre à la gorge.*

against ourselves. And that philosopher of ancient time [1] would never have lacked occasion for his tears whenever he considered himself. (*c*) Miso, one of the seven sages, of a Timonian and Democritian humor, being asked why he laughed when alone, replied, "because I alone laugh." [2]

(*b*) How many foolish things, in my own opinion, I say and reply every day, and naturally [3] how many more in the opinion of others! (*c*) If I bite my lips because of them, what may not others do? In short, we must live with the living, and let water flow under the bridge without paying heed to it, or at least without discomposure. (*b*) But truly, why without being stirred up do we meet one who has a crooked and misshapen body, yet can not endure the meeting with an ill-framed mind without being angry? This mistaken asperity arises more from the judge than from the offence. Let us have always on our lips this saying of Plato: (*c*) "What seems to me unhealthy, is it not because I am healthy myself? (*b*) Am I not in fault myself? May not my admonition turn against myself?" [4] Oh, wise and divine saying, which lashes the most universal and common error of mankind! (*c*) Not only the reproofs we give one another, but also our reasons and our arguments and matters of controversy, can commonly be turned back upon us, and we wound ourselves with our own weapons; whereof antiquity affords me many important examples. (*b*) It was wittily said, and very aptly, by him who forged the phrase,

Stercus cuique suum bene olet.[5]

(*c*) Our eyes see nothing behind us. A hundred times a day we laugh at ourselves when laughing at our neighbours, and detest in other men the defects which are more visible in ourselves, and wonder at them with marvellous shamelessness and inadvertence. It was but yesterday that I was so placed as to observe a man of intelligence making

[1] Heraclitus. Cf. Book I, chap. 50 (Vol II, p. 6).
[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Miso*.
[3] *Volontiers*.
[4] See Plutarch, *Of Hearing*.
[5] Every man's filth smells sweet to himself. — Erasmus, *Adages*, III, 4.2: *Suus cuique crepitus bene olet*.

fun, as amusingly as justly, of the foolish habit of another who wearies every one with the record of his genealogy and alliances, more than half false (those people enter most readily into such ridiculous talk whose titles are most doubtful and least assured); and he, had he retired into himself, would have found himself scarcely less immoderate and wearisome in spreading abroad and setting forth the preëminence of his wife's family. Oh, unmannerly presumption, with which his wife finds herself armed by the hands of her husband himself! If he understood Latin, he should be told, —

Age! si hæc non insanit satis sua sponte, instiga.[1]

I do not say that no one should find fault who is himself to be blamed (yes, and even blamed for the same sort of blemish), for then no one would find fault; but I mean that our judgement, lying heavy upon another of whom at the time there is question, does not exempt us from an inward and stern jurisdiction. It is a duty of charity that he who can not do away a vice in himself should none the less seek to do it away in another person in whom it may have a less poisonous and less obstinate root; nor does it seem to me answering to the purpose to say to him who warns me of my failing that it is also in him. What matters that? The warning is still true and useful. If we had a keen scent, our ordure would stink to us the more for as much as it is our own; and Socrates is of the opinion that whosoever should find himself and his son and a stranger guilty of any violence and injury should first accuse himself and present himself for the condemnation of the law, and implore for his expiation the aid of the executioner's hand; in the second place, for his son's, and lastly for the stranger's.[2] If this precept takes somewhat too lofty a tone, at least he should present himself the first for punishment by his own conscience.

(*b*) The senses are our peculiar and principal judges, which perceive things only by external circumstances; and

[1] Come! if she is not mad enough of her own accord, provoke her. — Terence, *Andria*, IV, 2.9.

[2] See Plato, *Gorgias*.

it is no wonder if in all the parts of the action of our social life there is such a perpetual and universal composition of ceremonies and superficial happenings that the best and most effective part of governments consists therein. It is always with man that we have to do, whose condition is marvellously corporeal. Let not those be surprised who have thought of late years to build up for us so contemplative and immaterial a practice of religion, if there may be found some who think that it would have slipped through their fingers and melted away if it did not remain among us, more as a mark, title, and instrument of division and faction, than for its own sake. So in conversation: the gravity, the gown, and the luck of the speaker often give weight to idle and inept discourse; it is not to be presumed that a gentleman so followed after, so redoubtable, has not in him more than common ability, and that a man to whom are given so many charges and offices, a man so disdainful and of such severe countenance, is not more able than that other who salutes him from a distance and whom no one employs. Not only the words, but also the expression of countenance, of such men are considered and taken into account, every one striving to give them some pleasing and trustworthy interpretation. If they stoop to common talk, and you shew them any thing save approbation and respect, they fell you with the authority of their experience: they have heard, they have seen, they have done; you are overwhelmed with proofs. I could readily say to them that the fruit of a surgeon's experience is not the tale of his patients and the calling to mind that he has cured four persons of the plague and three of the gout, if he does not derive from that success the wherewithal to form his judgement and does not make us perceive that he is the wiser for the practice of his art; (*c*) just as in a concert of instruments we do not hear a lute, a spinet, and a flute — we hear a full harmony, the union and result of them altogether. (*b*) If travels and official positions have improved them, it is for the product of their intelligence to make this appear. It is not enough to number experiences — they must be weighed and sorted, and they must have been digested and analysed to extract from them the information and conclu-

sion which they contain. There were never so many historians. It is always well and profitable to listen to them, for they supply us abundantly with excellent and praiseworthy instruction from the storehouse of their memory — a large item, assuredly, of assistance in life; but we are not at this moment enquiring as to that; we are enquiring whether these narrators and collectors are themselves worthy of praise.

I hate every sort of tyranny, both of words and of deeds.[1] I readily resist to the utmost the power of these idle circumstances which delude our judgement through the senses; and, carefully watching these unusual greatnesses, I have found that they are (*c*) for the most part (*b*) men like other men.

> Rarus enim ferme sensus communis in illa
> Fortuna.[2]

Perchance we judge them and perceive them to be less than they are because they assume to be more and display themselves as being more; they do not correspond to the burden they have taken on themselves. There must needs be more strength and power in the bearer than in the burden; he whose strength has not been exhausted leaves it to you to divine whether he has still more strength, and whether he has been tested to the utmost; he who succumbs to his burden reveals the measure of his power and the weakness of his shoulders. This is why we find so many inept minds among scholars, and more than of other kinds; they would have made good heads of a household, good tradesmen, good artisans; their natural vigour was cut to that measure. Learning is a thing of great weight; they sink under it; their understanding is not powerful enough or manageable enough to exhibit and deal out that rich and potent material, to make use of it for others and to assist themselves by it; learning can accomplish this only in a strong nature; now, such natures are very rare. (*c*) And the weak, says Socrates, impair the dignity of philosophy by meddling

[1] *Et la parliere et l'effectuelle.*

[2] For common sense is seldom found among those of such fortune. — Juvenal, VIII, 73.

with it; it appears both useless and harmful when it is in a poor receptacle.[1] (*b*) See how they injure and befool themselves,

> Humani qualis simulator simius oris,
> Quem puer arridens pretioso stamine serum
> Velavit, nudasque nates ac terga reliquit,
> Ludibrium mensis.[2]

In like manner, for those who rule over us and command us, who hold the world in their hands, it is not enough for them to have an ordinary intelligence, to be able to do what we can do; they are very far beneath us if they are not very far above us. As they promise more, so they owe us more; and therefore silence is in them not only an attitude of discretion and seriousness, but often of advantage and policy as well; as when Megabysus, having gone to see Apelles in his working-room, was a long while without saying a word, and then began to talk about the painter's works; he thereupon received this sharp rebuke: "Whilst you kept silent, you seemed to be something great because of your gold chain and your splendour; but now that you have been heard talking, there is no one, even to the boys in my shop, who does not despise you."[3] His magnificent apparel, his great state, made it not permissible for him to be ignorant with a vulgar ignorance and to speak unintelligently of painting; he should have maintained, by remaining mute, that external and presumptive competence. For how many feeble minds in my day has a cold and taciturn bearing served as a proof of good sense and capacity!

Dignities, offices are necessarily bestowed rather by fortune than by merit; and it is often a mistake to lay the blame on kings. On the contrary it is a marvel that they have so much luck, having so little skill;

[1] *Quand elle est mal estuyée.* See Plato, *Republic*, book VI.

[2] Like a monkey, whose face is like a man's, which a boy has laughingly covered with a costly garment of silk, but whose buttocks and back he has left bare, the laughing-stock of the guests. — Claudian, *In Eutropium*, I, 303.

[3] See Plutarch, *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend*, and *Of the tranquillity of the mind.*

Principis est virtus maxima nosse suos;[1]

for nature has not given them the vision that can extend its sight over so many folk to discover preëminence amongst them, and to enter into our breasts, where may be recognised our will and our best worth. They must needs choose us by conjecture and gropingly, by family, wealth, learning, and the popular voice: very weak evidence. He who could find a way to judge of men justly and to select them reasonably would establish by that sole proceeding a perfect form of government. "But truly he fitly conducted this great business." That says something, but it does not say enough; for this opinion is justly approved, that we must not judge of counsels by results.[2] (*c*) The Carthaginians punished the ill-advised plans of their commanders even though they were redressed by a fortunate issue; [3] and the Roman people often denied a triumph to great and very useful victories, because the general's management did not correspond to his good-fortune. (*b*) It is usually seen in the affairs of the world that Fortune, who takes pleasure in humbling our presumption, to teach us how great her power is over all things, being unable to make the incompetent wise, makes them lucky, as if to despite virtue, and lends herself readily to favour performances of which the framework is most purely her own. Whence it is seen every day that the most unskilful of us carry to an end very important affairs, both public and private; and, as Sirannes the Persian replied to those who were surprised that his affairs prospered so ill, seeing that his words were so wise, that he was the sole master of his words but that the success of his affairs was in the hands of Fortune,[4] so these persons can reply to the same effect, but from an opposite standpoint. The greater number of things in the world are shaped by themselves, —

Fata viam inveniunt.[5]

[1] The greatest virtue of a prince is to know his own subjects. — Martial, VIII, 15.8. Taken by Montaigne from the *Politics* of J. Lipsius, IV, 5.

[2] Cf. Ovid, *Heroïdes*, II, 85.

[3] See Livy, XXXVIII, 48.

[4] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.

[5] The Fates find a way. — Virgil, *Æneid*, III, 395.

The issue often gives authority to very incapable guidance. Our interposition is scarcely more than following a beaten path, and is commonly an advisement of custom and example rather than of reason. Some time ago, when I was amazed by the greatness of an affair, I learned, from those who had carried it through, their motive and their methods; I found therein only commonplace counsels; and the most commonplace and threadbare are, perchance, also the surest and best adapted for practice, if not for show. What if the simplest reasons are the best based, if the humblest and loosest ones and those most threshed out are best applied to public affairs?[1] To preserve the authority of the council chamber of kings there is no need that worldlings[2] should enter it and see further into it than the first barrier; it must be reverenced on credit and as a whole, if it is desired to sustain its reputation. My examination rough-hews the matter a little, and lightly regards it in its first aspect; the stress and chief part of the business I am wont to resign to heaven:

Permitte divis cætera.[3]

Good-fortune and ill-fortune are to my mind two sovereign powers. It is ignorance to deem that human knowledge can play the part of fortune; and vain is the undertaking of him who presumes to embrace both causes and consequences and to lead by the hand the course of his action — especially vain in the deliberations of war.[4] There was never more military circumspection and prudence than (*c*) is seen sometimes amongst us; (*b*) can it be that, reserving themselves for the final act of the play, men fear to lose their way? I say further that our very wisdom and deliberation follow for the most part the guidance of chance. My will and my judgement are moved, now in one direction, now in another; and there are many of these motions that

[1] *Les plus basses et laches, et les plus battues, se couchent mieux aux affaires.*

[2] *Les personnes profanes.*

[3] Leave the rest to the gods. — Horace, *Odes*, I, 9.9.

[4] Cf. Book I, chap. 47 (Vol. I, p. 376): "So we are wont often to say, with good reason, that events and results depend for the most part, notably in war, upon fortune."

are governed without me; my reason has uncertain and transitory impulses and revolutions.

> Vertuntur species animorum, et pectora motus
> Nunc alios, alios dum nubila ventus agebat,
> Concipiunt.[1]

If one observes who in cities have the most power and who best do their business, it will commonly be found that they are the least skilled. It has happened that feeble women and children and witless men have ruled over great states equally well with the most capable princes. (*c*) And Thucydides says that dull minds more commonly succeed [2] in this than cunning ones.[3] (*b*) We attribute the effects of their good-fortune to their discretion.

> (*c*) Ut quisque fortuna utitur,
> Ita præcellet, atque exinde sapere illum omnes dicimus.[4]

(*b*) Wherefore I say distinctly that occurrences are weak testimonies to our value and capacity.

I was just now treating here of this point, that it needs but to see a man raised in rank: if we knew him three days before as a man of little consequence, there glides insensibly into our minds a conception of great ability; and we are persuaded that, as his retinue and influence are larger, his merit has increased. We judge him not according to his work but as with counters,[5] according to the preëminence of his rank. Let chance change again, let him fall and be lost in the crowd, every one asks himself wonderingly what cause hoisted him so high. "Is this the same man?" they say. "Did he know nothing more when he was there placed? Are princes contented with so little? Verily we were in good hands!" This is a thing that I have often seen in my

[1] The dispositions of minds are changed; and hearts feel some emotions now, others when the wind drives the clouds away. — Virgil, *Georgics*, I, 420.

[2] *Rencontrer = reussir.*

[3] See Thucydides, III, 37. Taken from the *Politics* of J. Lipsius, IV, 3.

[4] Only by favour of fortune does a man rise, and fortune is the touchstone by which we all judge of his skill. — Plautus, *Pseudolus*, II, 3.15. Taken from the *Politics* of J. Lipsius, IV, 9.

[5] *A la mode des getons* (*jetons*).

time, aye, and the semblance of grandeur that is represented in plays somewhat touches us and gulls us. What I myself adore in kings is the crowd of their adorers. All deference to them and bowing before them is their due, except with the understanding; my reason is not framed to bend and stoop — that is for my knees.

Melanthius, being asked what he thought of the tragedy of Dionysius, "I did not see it," he replied, "it is so obscured with language." [1] So most of those who judge the utterances of the great might say, "I did not hear what he said, it was so obscured by solemnity, grandeur, and magnificence." Antisthenes one day advised the Athenians to order their asses to be as much used in tilling the ground as were horses; upon which he was answered that that animal was not made for such work. "It is all the same," he rejoined, "for the most ignorant and incapable men whom you employ to direct your wars do not fail immediately to become most worthy of the task because you thus employ them." [2] To which is akin the custom of so many nations of canonising the king they have chosen from among themselves, not being contented with honouring him if they do not adore him. The Mexicans, after the ceremony of his consecration is consummated, no longer dare to look him in the face; but, as if they had deified him by his royalty, amongst the oaths which they make him swear, to maintain their religion, their laws, their liberties, and to be brave, just, and affable, he swears also to make the sun roll on with its wonted light, to drain the clouds at timely seasons, to make rivers run their course, and the earth bring forth all things necessary for his people.[3]

I differ from the common fashion, and distrust ability the more when I find it accompanied by greatness of fortune and popular commendation. We must needs be on our guard against the advantage it is for a man to speak when he will, to choose his own time, to break off talk or to change it with a master's authority, to defend himself from the objections of others by a shake of the head, a smile, or silence,

[1] See Plutarch, *Of Hearing*.
[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Antisthenes*.
[3] See Gomara, *Histoire Générale des Indes*, II, 77.

before an assembly tremulous with reverence and respect. A man of prodigious fortune, bringing forward his opinion about some slight matter which was being carelessly tossed to and fro at his table, began in just this way: "It can be only a liar or a fool who says otherwise than," and so forth. Follow up this wise proposition with a poniard in your hand.

Consider here another admonition from which I derive much profit: that in altercations and formal discourse all sayings which seem to us to be sound should not be hastily accepted. Most men are rich with borrowed ability. It may well happen to such a one to use an admirable expression, make an apt response and remark, and put it forth without perceiving its force. (*c*) That one does not possess all that one borrows may perchance be verified in my own case. (*b*) We must not always give way to this faculty, whatever truth or beauty it may have. We must combat it in good faith, or draw back under colour of not understanding it, to examine in every way how it has entered the speaker's mind. It may happen that we aid the word-stroke of our adversary to carry it beyond its own reach.[1] I have in other days, in the necessity and stress of combat, made use of back-thrusts which pierced beyond my purpose and my hope; I dealt them only by number, their effect was by weight.[2] Exactly as, when I am debating with a vigorous man, I please myself by anticipating his conclusions, I relieve him of the trouble of interpreting himself, I try to anticipate his still imperfect and unformed thoughts (the regularity and the pertinency of his intelligence admonishing and menacing me from afar), so with those others I follow just the contrary course; we must understand nothing except through them, nor pre-suppose any thing. If they give judgement in general terms, "This is good, that is not so"; and if they hit the mark,[3] see whether it be chance that does it for them.

(*c*) Let them circumscribe and limit their remark a little:

[1] *Que nous nous enferrons, et aidons au coup outre sa portée.*

[2] *Je ne les donnois qu'en nombre, on les recevoit en pois.* The sentence seems not wholly appropriate here.

[3] *Qu'ils rencontrent.*

why it is so; how it is so. These sweeping judgements which I find to be so common mean nothing; they are like persons who salute a large body of people in a crowd and in a body; they who have real knowledge of them salute them and take note of them by name and individually.[1] But it is a dangerous undertaking. Whence I have seen it happen — and oftener than every day — that ill-grounded minds, wishing, when reading some work, to appear well skilled by remarking on some special beauty, fix their admiration with so bad a choice that instead of shewing us the excellence of the author, they show their own ignorance. It is a safe exclamation: "How fine that is!" after listening to a full page of Virgil. In that way the wily ones save themselves. But to undertake to follow him step by step[2] and with peculiar and considered judgement; to try to point out where a good author rises above himself, weighing his words, his phrases, his conceits, and his various excellences one after another — beware of attempting that! *Videndum est non modo quid quisque loquatur, sed etiam quid quisque sentiat, atque etiam qua de causa quisque sentiat.*[3] I daily hear fools say things that are not foolish.

(*b*) They[4] say a good thing; let us find out how far they understand it, let us see whence they obtained it. We help them to make use of this fine expression, and this fine argument which is not their own; they simply have it in keeping; they have brought it out at a venture, and feeling their way; we place it for them in credit and esteem. You lend them a hand — for what? They are in no wise grateful to you for it and become thereby the more stupid. Do not aid them, let them go on; they will handle the matter like people who are afraid of burning themselves; they dare not change its position or the light it is in, or go deep into it. Give it ever so little a shake, it slips from their hands; they abandon it to you, however strong and fine it may be; the weapons are excellent, but are poorly helved. How many

[1] Cf. Plutarch, *Of the dæmon of Socrates*.

[2] *Par espaulettes* — a phrase of Montaigne's coining.

[3] We must scrutinise not only men's words, but also their opinions, and even the bases of those opinions. — Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 41.

[4] That is, those who give judgement in general terms.

times have I had experience of this! Now if you set about enlightening them and confirming them, they seize upon you and immediately steal from you the advantage of your interpretation. "That is what I meant to say, that is exactly my idea; if I did n't so express it, it was merely for lack of language." Nonsense![1] Even guile must be employed to correct this arrogant ignorance. (*c*) The dogma of Hegesias, that we must neither hate nor blame, but instruct,[2] is reasonable elsewhere; but here (*b*) it is unjust and inhuman to succour and make right him who cares not and who is worth the less. I like to let them sink deeper into the mire and involve themselves even more than they now are involved, and so deep, if it be possible, that they will at last recognise themselves for what they are.

Stupidity and confusion of thought is not a matter that can be cured by a single word of warning. (*c*) And we may fitly say of such correction[3] what Cyrus said in reply to him who urged him to exhort his army on the eve of a battle: that men are not made suddenly brave and warlike by a fine harangue, any more than one becomes a musician immediately from hearing a fine song.[4] There are apprenticeships that must be served beforehand, with long and constant education. (*b*) We owe this attention to those under our care, and this assiduity in correction and instruction; but to go preaching to the first passer-by and tutoring the ignorance or stupidity of the first man you meet is a habit I can not endure.[5] I rarely do this, even in talks with myself alone; and I give up every thing rather than proceed to these out-of-the-way and schoolmasterlike instructions. (*c*) My nature is as little adapted to speak as to write for beginners.[6] (*b*) But as to the things that are said by every one or in the presence of other persons, however false and absurd I consider them, I never put myself in opposition to them either by word or by sign. As to the rest, nothing vexes me so much in stupidity as that it is more pleased

[1] *Soufflez!*
[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristippus.*
[3] *Reparation.*
[4] See Xenophon, *Cyropædeia*, III, 3.49.
[5] *Auquel je veux grand mal.*
[6] *Principians* — a word of Montaigne's coining.

with itself than any intelligence can reasonably be with itself. It is ill-luck that discretion forbids you to be satisfied with yourself, and to trust in yourself, and always dismisses you ill content and faint-hearted, whereas opinionativeness and rashness fill their possessors with rejoicing and assurance. It is those who most lack ability who look at other men over the shoulder, always returning from the fray full of pride and gladness. And most frequently, too, this arrogance of speech and cheerful aspect give them the better of it in the opinion of bystanders, who are ordinarily of weak intelligence and incapable of judging well and discerning the real advantage. (*c*) Obstinacy and heat of opinion are the surest signs of dulness: is there any thing so firm, resolute, disdainful, meditative, serious, and solemn as the ass?

(*b*) May we not include under the name of conversation and exchange of thoughts[1] the brief and pointed remarks which vivacity and intimacy introduce among friends jesting and jibing at one another merrily and wittily? a practice for which my natural gaiety makes me well suited; and if it be not as forcible and serious as the other I have been speaking of, it is not less penetrating and able, (*c*) nor less profitable, as it seemed to Lycurgus.[2] (*b*) For my part, I bring to it more freedom of speech than wit, and I have more luck in it than originality; but I am perfect in toleration, for I endure a retort not only sharp, but inconsiderate, without wincing. And when I am attacked, if I have not the wherewithal to reply instantly with vivacity, I do not stay to follow up the point with a tedious and flagging contest verging on obstinacy; I let it pass, and, cheerfully humbling myself,[3] I postpone getting my dues to some more fortunate hour; there is no merchant who always gains. Most men change in face and voice when strength fails them and, by unseasonable anger, instead of revenging themselves, betray their weakness together with their discomfort. In this jollity we sometimes twitch the secret strings of our imperfections (which in soberness we can not

[1] *Au titre de la conference et communication.*
[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus.*
[3] *Baissant joyeusement les oreilles.*

touch without giving pain) and warn one another profitably of our defects.

There are also bodily pastimes,[1] reckless and rough after the French manner, which I mortally hate; my skin is tender and sensitive; [2] in my lifetime I have seen two princes of our blood royal [3] laid in their graves by them. (*c*) It looks ill to slay in sport.[4]

(*b*) For the rest, when I wish to form a judgement of a man, I ask him how well content he is with himself, how much what he says or what he does pleases him. I wish to avoid such fine excuses as, "I did it without effort;

Ablatum mediis opus est incudibus istud; [5]

I was not an hour about it; I have not looked at it since." To this I say: "Let us then lay aside these things; give me one which represents the whole of you, by which it may please you to be measured." And again: "What do you consider most excellent in your work? Is it this part, or this? its beauty, or its matter, or its conception, or its insight, or its learning?" For usually I observe that a man errs as much in judging his own work as that of another, not only from the good-will he bears it but from not having the ability to recognise and distinguish what it is. The work, by its own force and fortune, can assist the workman (*c*) and anticipate him (*b*) beyond his conception and knowledge. For my part, I do not judge of the worth of other work more vaguely than of my own, and I place the Essays now low, now high, very hesitatingly and doubtfully.

There are many books, useful by virtue of their subjects, from which the author derives no commendation, and good books, like good works, which shame the workman. I may write of the style of our banquets and our clothes, and I shall write with an ill grace; I may publish the edicts of my time and the letters of princes which come into the hands of the public; I may make an abridgement of a good

[1] *Jeux de main.* [2] A figurative expression.

[3] Probably the duc d'Enghien, killed in sport (1546), and Henri II, killed in jousting by the comte de Montgommery (1559).

[4] *Se battre en s'esbattant.*

[5] This work was taken unfinished from the loom. — Ovid, *Tristia*, I, 7.29.

book (and every abridgement of a good book is a foolish abridgement), which book may be lost — and like matters. Posterity may derive singular benefit from such compositions; I, what honour unless it be by my good-fortune? A goodly number of famous books are of this nature.

When, many years ago, I read Philippe de Commines, certainly a most excellent author, I noticed this saying as not commonplace, that a man must beware of doing so much for his master as to prevent him from finding a just recompense therefrom.[1] I should have praised the thought, not him. I found it not long ago in Tacitus: *Beneficia eo usque læta sunt dum videntur exolvi posse; ubi multum antevenere, pro gratia odium redditur.*[2] (*c*) And Seneca vigorously says: *Nam qui putat esse turpe non reddere non vult esse cui reddat.*[3] Quintus Cicero, in weaker phrase: *Qui se non putat satisfacere amicus esse nullo modo potest.*[4]

(*b*) The subject in itself may make a man appear learned and possessed of a good memory; but to judge in him those parts most his own and of most worth, the strength and beauty of his soul, we must know what is his own and what is not so, and in that which is not his, how much is due to him in respect to the choice, arrangement, adornment, and language which he has therein supplied. What if he has borrowed the substance and impaired the form, as often happens? We who have little dealing with books are in this difficulty, that, when we see some fine fancy in a new poet, some forcible argument in a preacher, we do not dare to praise them for it until we have learned from some scholar whether this is their own or whether it is borrowed. Until then I always stand on my guard.

I have lately been reading without a break the history of Tacitus (which seldom happens to me; it is twenty years

[1] See Commines, III, 12. Commines attributes the saying to his master, Louis XI.

[2] Benefactions are welcome so long as we know that we are able to return them; but if they far surpass our means of requiting them, they become hateful to us. — Tacitus, *Annals*, IV, 18.

[3] For he who deems it disgraceful not to return a favour would like to have nobody to whom he is indebted. — Seneca, *Epistle* 81.

[4] The man who thinks he has not discharged his debt to you can by no means be a friend. — Q. Cicero, *De Petitione Consulatus*, IX.

since I gave an entire hour to a book);[1] and I did it at the suggestion of a gentleman whom France greatly esteems, both for his own worth and for an unfailing sort of ability and goodness which is seen in the many brothers there are. I know no author who connects with a public chronicle so much consideration of private manners and tendencies. He is in this no less careful and diligent than Plutarch, who made express profession of it.[2] (*c*) And it seems to me the opposite of what it seemed to him: that, having especially to follow the lives of the emperors of his time, so diverse and so extreme in all sorts of ways, and so many noteworthy deeds that their cruelty expressly produced in their subjects, he had matter more solid and attractive to discourse of and to narrate than if he had had to tell of universal battles and commotions;[3] so that I often find him unprofitable, hurrying over those noble deaths[4] as if he feared to annoy us with their multitude and wearisomeness.

(*b*) This sort of history is much the most useful; public movements depend chiefly on the guidance of fortune, private ones on our own; and yet he has not forgotten what he owed to the other side.[5] He gives us personal judgement rather than a deduction from history; there are more precepts in it than narratives. It is not a book to read, it is a book to study and learn; it is so full of opinions that there are both wrong and right ones; it is a nursery of ethical and political discourses for the purveying and garnishment of those who have some prominence in managing the world. He argues always with solid and vigorous reasons, in a keen and subtle manner, following the style belonging to the time, when men so greatly liked to rise above the common[6] that when they did not find point and subtlety in things, they borrowed it from words. His style is not unlike that of Seneca: it seems to me more full in words,

[1] Cf. Book II, chap. 10 (Vol. II, p. 142): "If I spend an hour in reading him [Cicero], which is a long time for me."

[2] This sentence was omitted in 1595.

[3] See Tacitus, Annals XVI, 16; Jean Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem.*

[4] Deaths commanded by the emperor.

[5] The sentence after the semicolon was omitted in 1595.

[6] *A s'enfler.*

Seneca's the more concise.[1] He is more adapted to be of service to a disturbed and disordered state like our present one; you would often say that he is painting us and pinching us. Those who question whether he is to be trusted betray plainly that they bear him ill-will on some other ground. He has sound opinions and inclines to the right side in Roman affairs. I regret a little, however, that he judged Pompeius more severely than comports with the opinion of men of worth who lived in his day and had dealings with him; that he estimated him as entirely on a par with Marius and Sylla save inasmuch as he had more dissimulation.[2] His intention in the government of affairs has not been acquitted of ambition or of vengeance; and even his friends feared that success would have swept him beyond the bound of reason but not to so reckless an extent.[3] There is nothing in his life which threatened such manifest cruelty and tyranny. Besides, suspicion must not be allowed to balance evidence; so I do not believe Tacitus in this. That his narratives are honest and sincere might perhaps be argued from just this, that they are not always exactly in conformity with the conclusions of his judgements, which follow the bias he has taken often outside the matter he puts before us, which he has not deigned to distort by a hair's breadth. He needs no excuse for having avowed the religion of his time as the laws enjoined, and for having ignored the true religion; that is his misfortune, not his fault.

I have considered chiefly his judgement, and I am not everywhere clearly enlightened by it. For instance, these words in the letter that Tiberius, old and sick, sent to the Senate: "What shall I write to you, sirs,[4] or how shall I write to you, or what shall I not write to you at this time? May the gods and goddesses destroy me more cruelly than I every day feel myself to be perishing, if I know!" [5] I do not perceive why he ascribes them so surely to a poignant remorse that torments the conscience of Tiberius; and in

[1] *Il me semble plus charnu, Seneque plus aigu.*
[2] See Tacitus, *History*, II, 38.
[3] As with Marius and Sylla.
[4] *Patres conscripti* in the Latin.
[5] See Tacitus, *Annals*, VI, 6. Cf. Suetonius, *Life of Tiberius*.

other days, when I was more competent than now, I did not see it. This also seems to me a little unmanly, that, having had occasion to mention that he had held a certain honourable office at Rome, he says in excuse that it was not from ostentation that he spoke of it.[1] This trait seems to me poor-spirited [2] for a soul like his, since there is some lack of courage in not daring to speak freely of oneself; a firm and lofty judgement, which judges sanely and surely, makes use unhesitatingly of personal examples as well as of other things, and bears witness as frankly about itself as about a third person. The ordinary rules of modesty must be overlooked in favour of truth and freedom.

(*c*) I dare not only to speak about myself, but to speak only about myself. I go astray when I write of any thing else, and wander from my subject. I do not so unreasonably love myself and am not so united and blended with myself that I can not distinguish and consider myself apart, like a neighbour, like a tree. It is equally a mistake not to see what one is worth, or to say more of it than one sees. We owe more love to God than to ourselves and we know him less, and yet we talk our fill of him.

(*b*) If his writings [3] reveal any thing of his qualities, he was a man of great distinction, upright and fearless, of a virtue not superstitious but philosophical and of the right stamp.[4] He may be found over-bold in his statements: as when he believes that, as a soldier was carrying a load of wood, his hands were stiffened by the cold and were fast joined to his burden, so that they remained attached to it and dead, having separated from his arms.[5] I am wont in matters like this to bow to the authority of such great witnesses. When he says also that Vespasian, by the grace of the god Serapis, cured a blind woman [6] in Alexandria by anointing her eyes with his saliva, and I know not what other miracle, he does so according to the example and

[1] See Tacitus, *Annals*, XI, 11.
[2] *Bas de poil.*
[3] Those of Tacitus.
[4] *Genereuse.*
[5] See Tacitus, *Annals*, XIII, 35.
[6] It was a man. See Idem, *History*, IV, 81. "It is well to remember," says M. Villey, "that in *Le Contre-un* La Boëtie contested the authority of Tacitus, precisely because of the miracles he ascribed to Vespasian."

duty of all good historians. They keep a record of important events; amongst the public happenings are comprised common rumours and opinions. It is their business to set down popular beliefs, not to square them. That part concerns theologians and philosophers, directors of consciences. Wherefore this friend of his, and like him a great man, says very wisely: *Equidem plura transcribo quam credo; nam nec affirmare sustineo de quibus dubito, nec subducere quae accepi;*[1] this is very well said. (*c*) And this other: *Haec neque affirmare, neque refellere operæ pretium est . . . famæ rerum standum est.*[2] And, writing in an age when belief in miracles was beginning to diminish, he says that none the less he does not choose to fail to insert in his annals, and give standing to, any thing accepted by so many men of worth and regarded with such reverence in ancient times.[3] (*b*) Let them give us history more according to what they receive than to what they believe. I, who have unlimited power over the subjects that I treat,[4] and am accountable for it to no one, do not, nevertheless, altogether believe myself about it; I often hazard sudden bursts of my mind, (*c*) which I distrust, and certain verbal refinements which I am inclined to shake off.[5] (*b*) But I let them pass at a venture. (*c*) I see that some persons take pride in such things; it is not for me alone to judge of them. I present myself standing up and lying down, front and back, right and left, and in all my natural attitudes. (*b*) Men's minds, even if alike in strength, are not always alike in conformity[6] and in taste.

This is what my memory of Tacitus presents to me in gross and with much uncertainty. All general judgements are weak and imperfect.

[1] Indeed, I set down more than I believe; for I undertake neither to affirm matters about which I am in doubt nor to withdraw what I have accepted as true. — Quintus Curtius, IX, 1.

[2] It is not worth the trouble either to affirm or to disprove these matters . . . we must abide by the tradition. — Livy, I, Præfatio, and VIII, 6.

[3] See Idem, XLIII, 13–15.

[4] *Moi qui suis roy de la matiere que je traicte.*

[5] *De quoi je secoue les oreilles.*

[6] *Application.*

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CHAPTER IX

OF VANITY[1]

Some curious questions are suggested by this Essay. It has a marked irregularity of form, and, as familiarity with it increases, it seems almost as if two outlines, two forms, may be distinguished in it. Two different dates are found in it, each as being the date of its writing.

Montaigne refers twice to the death of his father, which took place in 1568, as having occurred eighteen years before the time when he was writing, which would make that time 1586; and on another page he speaks of the death of Pibrac (1584) as recent. But he says: *Je suis envielli de huit ans depuis mes premières publications.* This would make the year 1588, as the first edition of the Essays was of 1580.

It may be said that perhaps this Essay was on the stocks for two years. The character of the opening pages is such that, written in the year of the publication of the edition of the Essays in which for the first time this Third Book appeared, they might serve almost as a preface to all the Essays.

These opening pages express Montaigne's recognition of the endlessness of his subject and of its (apparent) triviality, and uselessness (to the State), leading on to the remark that *escrivaillerie* is one sign of a nation's decadence.

But even worse than the folly of idle writing is his weakness, he says, in throwing every thing to the dogs when matters go badly; a despairing despondency that he expresses in one of those sentences of melancholy which, as the Saône with the Rhone, mingle with the large flow of his philosophy: *Ce m'est faveur que la desolation de cet Estat se rencontre à la desolation de mon aage.* He later fears that the *trahison* of his memory may be perceptible in these *revasseries.*

But, however imperfect his *revasseries* may be, *laisse, lecteur, courir encore ce coup d'essay et ce troisiesme alongeail du reste des pieces de ma peinture.* He gives his reasons why he does not correct his writings (in essentials), but only adds to them, and he thanks *les honnestes hommes* who have accepted his efforts with good-will.

Later he says: *Je sens ce proffit inesperé de la publication de mes meurs, qu'elle me sert aucunement* [that is, *un peu*] *de regle*, and he adds, with some tone of disappointment, that, besides this profit, he had hoped, in making himself known to the world, for another gain, the happiness of finding a friend.

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[1] It is to be observed that "vanity" has not here its ordinary significance, but is used rather in the sense of the "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," of the Preacher.

And still later: *J'escris mon livre à peu d'hommes et à peu d'années;* and this passage closes with a saddened sentence, to the effect that there will be no one by whom his memory will be cherished because of such affectionate and intimate knowledge of him as he had of his friend La Boëtie.

Interposed in these passages are others of a wholly different nature: page after page of cheerful garrulousness and conversational philosophy about his pleasure in travelling, merging into consideration of the wretched conditions of France; and his thought deepens, his voice strengthens, and the most serious questions of public importance are discussed with admirable vigour of intellect. He continues by describing his own personal position in the midst of the national troubles, and this leads him to the deeply interesting, much criticised, reflections on death. He then passes back to his travelling inclinations, and takes up the complaints brought against him for leaving his family, and for running the risk of dying away from home. He philosophises seriously on these points, so seriously that it carries him into reflections on the inconsistency between the moral laws that men lay down and their general conduct, the discussion of which forms an immense parenthesis of eight or ten pages, from *Je voy souvent qu'on nous propose des images de vie* to *J'avois à dire que je veus mal à cette raison trouble feste*, where he comes back to the subject of the captious difficulties raised by his friends.

It is very noticeable in these pages that in no Essay does Montaigne lay such stress on the necessity of careful and subtle attention on the part of his reader. In one passage he speaks of the mistakes that have occurred in the printing of the Essays:

Ne te prens point à moy, lecteur, de [*fautes*] *qui se coulent icy par la fantasie ou inadvertance d'autruy; chaque main, chaque ouvrier, y apporte les siennes. . . . Où ils rompent du tout* [that is, *tout-à-fait*] *le sens, je m'en donne peu de peine, car aumoins, ils me deschargent; mais où ils en substituent un faux, comme ils font si souvent, et me destournent à leur conception, ils me perdent. Toutesfois, quand la sentence n'est forte à ma mesure, un honneste homme la doit refuser pour mienne.*

THERE is perchance no more express vanity than to write of it so vainly. That which the Deity has thereon so divinely said to us should be carefully and constantly thought of by men of understanding. Who does not see that I have entered on a road by which without pause and without toil I may travel, as long as there are ink and paper in the world? I can not keep a record of my life by my actions; fortune makes them too humble; I keep it by my thoughts. In like manner I once saw a gentleman who made known his life only by the operation of his bowels; you might see at his house, on

exhibition, a row of pots of seven or eight days' use; it was his study, his conversation; every other subject had a bad smell to him. In these pages are found, a little more decently, the voidings of an old mind, now hard, now lax, and always undigested. And when shall I have done setting forth the continual motion and mutation of my thoughts, whatever matter they fall upon, since Diomedes wrote six thousand books on the sole subject of grammar?[1] What may not careless talk give birth to, when the stammering and imperfect speech of early ages stuffed the world with such a horrible mass of volumes! So many words about mere words! O Pythagoras, would that thou couldst have conjured to silence this tempest![2] One Galba in ancient times was blamed because he lived in idleness; he answered that every man should render an account of his actions, not of his inaction.[3] He was mistaken; for justice takes cognisance of, and censures, those who work not.

But there should be some legal restraint of stupid and useless writers, as there is of vagabonds and loiterers; I and a hundred other writers would then be cast out from the hands of our people. I am not jesting: scribbling seems to be a symptom of an age of excess; when did we ever write so much as since our public disturbances? And when did the Romans write so much as at the time of their downfall? Moreover, the bettering of men's minds is not one with the bettering of the government;[4] this idle kind of working is due to this, that every one goes laxly about the business of his calling and wanders away from it. The corruption of the age is made up by the special contribution of each one of us; some furnish treachery, others injustice, irreligion, tyranny, avarice, cruelty, according to the degree of their

[1] Montaigne evidently took this from Bodin, *Methodus*, etc., who confused a certain Diomedes, who lived about the sixth century A.D., with "Didymus grammaticus," of whom Seneca speaks (*Epistle* 88) as having written 4000 volumes.

[2] Pythagoras imposed on his disciples a silence of five years.

[3] The original source of the last clause is Suetonius (*Life of Galba*), who gives the saying to the Emperor Galba. Montaigne evidently took it at second hand from some book where the first clause had been added and the personage not clearly indicated.

[4] *L'affinement des esprits, ce n'en est pas l'assagissement en une police.*

power; the weaker bring to it dulness, trifling,[1] idleness — of whom I am one. It would seem as if it were the season for trifling things when harmful ones press upon us. At a time when to do evil is so common, to do only what is useless is, as it were, praiseworthy. I am of good cheer because I shall be amongst the last upon whom there will be occasion to lay hands. While the more prominent [sinners] are being attended to, I shall have time to mend my ways; for it seems to me that it would be contrary to reason to proceed against petty unsuitablenesses when we are infested by great ones. And the physician Philotimus said, when a man presented him his finger to dress, who, by his face and his breath, he perceived had an ulcer on the lung, "My friend, now is not the time to concern yourself about your nails."[2] However, I saw some years ago — I may say here — that a person whose memory I hold in peculiar regard thought well to publish at the height of our great disasters, — when neither law, nor justice, nor magistracy performed its functions any more than to-day, — certain trivial reforms concerning apparel, cookery, and legal pettifogging. Such are matters with which a misguided people is occupied and fed, to show that it is not entirely forgotten. These others do likewise, who insist on urgently prohibiting certain forms of speech, dances, and games, to a people given over to all sorts of execrable vices; it is no time to bathe and cleanse oneself when one is attacked by a violent fever. (*c*) It is for the Spartans alone to comb and curl their hair at the moment that they are about to throw themselves headlong into some extreme risk of life.[3]

(*b*) As for myself, I have this other worse habit: if I have a slipper carelessly put on, I am careless also about my shirt and my cloak;[4] I scorn to amend myself by halves. When I am in a bad plight, I desperately aid the evil; I give myself up, from despair, and let myself go toward my overthrow, (*c*) and, as they say, cast the helve after the hatchet. (*b*) I insist that things are getting worse and worse, and think myself no longer worth my care; either all well

[1] *Vanité.*
[2] See Plutarch, *Of Hearing.*
[3] See Herodotus, VII, 209.
[4] *Cappe:* a short cloak with a hood.

or all ill. It is favourable for me that the ruin of this kingdom comes at the same time with the ruin of my years; I more willingly suffer the increase of my ills thereby, than if my former good estate had been disturbed. The language that I use toward misfortune is the language of anger; [1] my courage bristles instead of sinking; and, unlike other men, I find myself more devout in good- than in ill-fortune, in conformity with Xenophon's precept, but not in conformity with his reason,[2] and I more readily do homage to heaven [3] in thanksgiving than in supplication. I take more pains to improve my health when it smiles upon me than I do to bring it back when I have driven it away; prosperity serves me as discipline and instruction, as adversity and scourgings serve others. (*c*) As if good-fortune were incompatible with a good conscience, men become of worth only in ill-fortune.[4] (*b*) Good-fortune is for me a peculiar spur to temperance and self-control; entreaties avail with me, menaces drive me the wrong way. (*c*) Kindness makes me kind; fear stiffens me.

(*b*) Amongst human states of mind this is rather common: to take more pleasure in unfamiliar than in habitual conditions, and to love movement and change:

> Ipsa dies ideo nos grato perluit haustu
> Quod permutatis Hora recurrit equis.[5]

I have my share of this. They who go to the other extreme of being satisfied with themselves, of thinking of what they have as above the rest, and of recognising nothing as more beautiful than what they see — if they are not more well-advised than we, they are certainly happier; I do not envy their wisdom, but their good-fortune I do. This eager

[1] Cf. Book III, chap. 2 (Vol. III, pp. 265ff.).

[2] The precept that Montaigne refers to does not belong to Xenophon himself, but he quotes it in the *Cyropædeia* (I, 6.3) as having been said by Cyrus to Cambyses. Plutarch (*Of the tranquillity of the mind*) somewhat enlarges and explains it.

[3] *Et faicts plus volontiers les doux yeux au ciel.*

[4] See Seneca, *Epistle* 94.

[5] The light of day so rejoices us as it bathes us in its waves, because each hour comes with changed horses. — Petronius, *Fragment* 678. Montaigne shows no familiarity with Petronius, and probably took this from Lipsius.

liking of new and unknown things greatly helps to foster in me the desire to travel, but many other circumstances contribute to it; I gladly withdraw from the management of my household. There is some advantage in being in command, were it only in a barn, and in being obeyed by those about you; but it is too monotonous and languid a pleasure. And then it is necessarily commingled with many disturbing thoughts: sometimes the poverty and oppression of your people, sometimes quarrels among your neighbours, sometimes their encroachments upon you, afflict you,

> Aut verberatæ grandine vineæ,
> Fundusque mendax, arbore nunc aquas
> Culpante, nunc torrentia agros
> Sidera, nunc hyemes iniquas;[1]

and that hardly once in six months shall God send you a season by which the keeper of your purse will be fully contented; and which, if it be beneficial to the vineyards, will not injure the meadows;

> Aut nimiis torret fervoribus ætherius sol,
> Aut subiti perimunt imbres, gelidæque pruinæ,
> Flabraque ventorum violento turbine vexant;[2]

and there may be added the new and well-made shoe of that man of old days, which hurts your foot;[3] and that no stranger understands how much it costs you, and how much you contribute to maintain that show of order which is seen in your household and which perchance you buy too dear.

I came late to the management of my property. They whom Nature caused to be born before me relieved me of it for a long time. I had already taken another bent, more in accordance with my temperament. However, as I see it,

[1] Or the vines are lashed by hail, and the farm proves false to its promise — the trees blaming now the rains, now the stars that parch the fields, now the harsh winters. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 1.29.

[2] Either the sun in the sky parches your fields with too great heat, or sudden storms and cold frosts destroy them, and blasts of wind shake them in a violent storm. — Lucretius, V, 215.

[3] Plutarch (*Life of Paulus Æmilius*) tells of a man who, when his friends wondered at his divorcing his wife, shewed them his fine new shoe, saying: "There's not one of you who knows where it hurts my foot."

it is an occupation more troublesome than difficult; he who has capacity for any thing will easily master this. If I sought to enrich myself, this road would seem to me too long; I should have taken service under our kings — a more fruitful commerce than any other. (*c*) Since I aim to acquire only the reputation of having not gained and not wasted, conformably to the rest of my life, which is unfitted to do good or to do evil of consequence, (*b*) and since I seek only to pass my days,[1] I can do that, thank God, without taking much thought. At the worst, one must always hasten to be in advance of poverty by retrenchment of expenses; that is what I depend upon, and to change my ways before it [2] compels me to do so. Meanwhile I have fixed in my mind several steps by which to get on with less than I have; I mean, to get on contentedly. (*c*) *Non æstimatione census, verum victu atque cultu, terminatur pecuniæ modus.*[3] (*b*) My real needs do not use up so entirely all my means that Fortune could not take a bite without going to the quick. My presence, ignorant and disregardful as it is, is a great assistance [4] to my domestic affairs; I busy myself about them, but against the grain; [5] moreover, I have this state of things in my house, that because I on my side burn the candle at my end, the other end is in no wise spared.

(*c*) Journeys harm me only by the expense, which is great and beyond my means, as I am wont to take with me not merely essential, but also well-befitting, attendance. I must needs make them shorter and less frequent, and use for them only my superfluity,[6] and my reserve supply, delaying and deferring according as this increases. I will not have the pleasure of wandering spoil the pleasure of being at home. On the contrary, I propose that they shall nourish and assist one another. Fortune has aided me in this, that, since my principal vocation in this life was to live it easily, and rather negligently than busily, she has taken from me the need of increasing my wealth in order to provide for

[1] *Puisque je ne cerche qu'à passer.* [2] Poverty.

[3] The measure of one's fortune is reckoned, not by the estimate of the census, but by one's manner of life. — Cicero, *Paradoxa*, VI, 3.

[4] *Preste grande espaule.*

[5] *Despiteusement.* [6] *L'escume.*

the multitude of my heirs. If that is not enough for one which has been so plentifully enough for me, the worse for him; his imprudence will not deserve that I should desire more for him. And every man, according to Phocion's example,[1] provides sufficiently for his children who provides for them to such extent that their condition is not unlike his. I should never be in sympathy with the doings of Crates. He left his money in the hands of a banker with this condition: that if his children were ignorant, he should give it to them; that if they had ability, he should distribute it among the more ignorant of the common people,[2] as if the ignorant, while less capable of doing without riches, were more capable in the use of them. (*b*) However this may be, the loss that comes from my absence does not seem to me to demand, whilst I have the wherewithal to support it, that I should refuse to accept such opportunities as present themselves to withdraw from my toilsome presence.

There is always something askew. The business dealings, now with one house, now with another, harry you. You look into every thing too closely. Your clearsightedness, here as elsewhere, is harmful for you. I shun occasions for being vexed, and turn away from the knowledge of things that are going wrong, and yet I can not so manage that I do not constantly meet at home with something that I dislike. (*c*) And the tricky expedients that are most carefully hidden from me are those that I best know. There are some which, that the less harm may come, one must assist oneself in hiding: (*b*) trivial vexations — trivial sometimes, but always vexations. The smallest and slightest troubles are the sharpest; and as little letters tire the eyes most, so do little matters harass us most.[3] (*c*) The throng of petty ills is more disagreeable than the violence of one, however great that may be. (*b*) In proportion as these domestic thorns are thicker and looser, they prick more sharply and without warning, easily taking us by surprise and unprepared.[4] (*c*) I am no

[1] See C. Nepos, *Phocion*, I; Plutarch, *Life of Phocion.*

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Crates.*

[3] See Plutarch, *How to restrain anger.*

[4] The following sentences, down to "weigh upon me," were substituted in 1595 for this passage of 1588: *Or nous monstre assez Homere combien la surprise donne d'avantage, qui faict Ulysse pleurant de la*

philosopher; ills press upon me according to their weight, and their weight comes from their form as much as from their substance, and often more. I feel them more keenly than is common, even if I have more endurance; in short, if they do not wound me, they weigh upon me.

(*b*) Life is a delicate thing and easily disquieted. When my face is turned toward depression, — (*c*) *nemo enim resistit sibi, cum cœperit impelli*,[1] — (*b*) however foolish the cause that may lead me to it, I excite my disposition in that direction, which is afterward fostered and aggravated by its own motion, attracting and heaping up one matter upon another, whereon to feed, —

Stillicidi casus lapidem cavat; [2]

I become raw and festering with these every-day gutter-droppings.[3] (*c*) Every-day mishaps are never slight; they are continuous and irreparable; when they arise from the details of household cares, they are continuous and inseparable. (*b*) When I consider my affairs at a distance and as a whole, I find, perhaps because my memory of them is not very exact, that they have prospered beyond my reckoning and my calculation. I draw from them, it seems to me, more than there is in them; their good success betrays me. But if I am inside the work, if I see how all the parts of it are going, —

Tum vero in curas animum diducimus omnes,[4] —

mort de son chien et ne pleurant point des pleurs de sa mere; le premier accident, tout legier qu'il estoit, l'emporta, d'autant qu'il en fut inopinéement assailly; il soustint le second, plus impetueux parce qu'il y estoit preparé. [See Plutarch, *Of the tranquillity of the mind.*] *Ce sont legieres occasions qui pourtant troublent la vie.* Montaigne made a curious blunder here, which was probably the reason the passage was omitted in 1595. When Ulysses meets his mother in Hades, nothing is said of *her* tears; but "Anon came up the soul of my mother, dead. . . . At the sight of her I wept." (*Odyssey*, XI.)

[1] For no man resists himself when he has begun to be moved. — Seneca, *Epistle* 13.

[2] The fall of water, drop by drop, hollows out stone. — Lucretius, I, 313.

[3] *Ces ordinaires gouttieres m'enfoncent et m'ulcerent.*

[4] Then we divide our minds amongst all these cares. — Virgil, *Æneid*, V, 720.

I find there a thousand things to desire and to fear. To pay no attention to them is very easy to me; very difficult, to take hold of them and not be harassed by them. It is a miserable thing to be in a place where all that you see gives you work to do and concerns you; and it seems to me that I enjoy more blithely the pleasures of a strange house, and that I bring to them a freer and purer appreciation. *(c)* Diogenes replied, in accordance with my feeling, to him who asked what kind of wine he found best, "the unfamiliar." [1]

(b) My father took pleasure in building at Montaigne, where he was born; and in all this government of domestic affairs I like to make use of his example and his rule, and I shall bind my successors to them so far as I can. If I could do better for him, I would do so. I am proud that his will is still being carried out and acting through me. God forbid that I should allow to slip through my hands any appearance of continued life which I can give to so good a father. If I have undertaken to finish some old section of wall and to restore some ill-constructed building, it has certainly been more out of regard for his intention than for my own pleasure. *(c)* And I blame my indolence in not having gone further to complete the things that he left unfinished in his house, because there is great likelihood that I am to be its last possessor of my family, and to give the last hand to it. *(b)* For as to my personal inclination, neither the pleasure in building which is said to be so attractive, nor hunting, nor gardens, nor the other pleasures of a secluded life, have the power to interest me much. This is something in which I displease myself, as in all other opinions which are disadvantageous to me. I do not desire so much that they should be vigorous and learned as I desire that they should be pleasurable and adapted to life. *(c)* They are, indeed, true and sound enough, if they are useful and agreeable.

(b) Those who, hearing me declare my incompetence in the things pertaining to husbandry, whisper in my ear that it is disdain, and that it is because I have at heart some higher kind of knowledge that I fail to learn about the implements of tillage, its seasons, its methods, how my wines

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Diogenes*.

are made, how grafting is done, and to know the names and appearance of the herbs and fruits, and what is the mode of preparation of the meats on which I live, (*c*) and the names and prices of the stuff with which I clothe myself — (*b*) they vex me beyond words; it is due to dulness and is rather stupidity than pride. I should like better to be a good horseman than a good logician.

> Quin tu aliquid saltem potius, quorum indiget usus,
> Viminibus mollique paras detexere junco? [1]

(*c*) We busy our thoughts with matters of general interest, and with universal causes and conduct which are conducted very well without us, and lose sight of our own doings,[2] and of Michel, who is nearer to us than man.

(*b*) Now I am, for the most part, content to stay at home, but I would like to enjoy myself there more than elsewhere.

> Sit meæ sedes utinam senectæ!
> Sit modus lasso maris, et viarum,
> Militiæque! [3]

I do not know whether I shall succeed in this. I could wish that, instead of some other part of what I inherit from him, my father had bequeathed to me that passionate interest which, in his last years, he felt for his domestic affairs. He was very fortunate in conforming his desires to his fortune and in pleasing himself with what he had. The philosophy of state government [4] may do its best to blame the meanness and fruitlessness of my occupation if I can once acquire the taste for it that he had. I am of this opinion, that the most honourable employment is to serve the public, and to be useful to many. (*c*) *Fructus enim ingenii et virtutis omnisque præstantiæ tum maximus accipitur, quum in proximum quemque confertur.*[5] (*b*) As for myself, I take

[1] Why do you not rather prepare to weave of osiers and pliant rushes something which daily need requires? — Virgil, *Eclogues*, II, 71.

[2] *Laissons en arriere nostre faict.*

[3] Oh, that I may find a place of repose for my old age! May my weariness find an end of voyaging and war! — Horace, *Odes*, II, 6.6.

[4] *La philosophie politique.*

[5] For the fruit of genius and valour and all excellence is most abundantly garnered when it is bestowed on our neighbours. — Cicero, *De Amicitia*, XIX.

no part in it; partly from conscience, — for when I see the weight that belongs to such employments I see how little means I have to supply it; (*c*) and Plato, a master workman in all state government, did not fail to abstain from it,[1] — (*b*) partly from laziness; I am content to enjoy the world without eagerness, to live a life simply excusable, and one which simply burdens neither myself nor others.

Never did man abandon himself more entirely and more negligently to the care and management of another than I would do if I knew to whom to commit myself. One of my wishes for these days would be to find a son-in-law who could fitly feed my old age and lull it to sleep; to whose keeping I might entrust the complete conduct and employment of my property, that he might do with it what I do with it, and gain from me what I gain by it, provided that he bring to the work a truly grateful and friendly heart. But what am I saying! We live in a world where loyalty in one's own children is unknown.

He who has charge of my purse in travelling has it absolutely and without oversight; he could easily deceive me in his accounts; and if he be not a devil, I compel him to do rightly by such utter confidence. (*c*) *Multi fallere docuerunt, dum timent falli et aliis jus peccandi suspicando fecerunt.*[2] (*b*) My habitual security about my people is an absence of knowledge. I do not presume vices until I have seen them, and I put the most confidence in the young, whom I think the least spoiled by bad examples. I am more ready to be told at the end of two months that I have spent four hundred crowns, than to have my ears assailed every evening with three, five, seven; yet I have been robbed as little as another by that sort of theft. It is true that I lend a helping hand to ignorance; I purposely keep my knowledge of my money somewhat confused and vague; up to a certain point I am glad to be able to doubt about it. A little margin must be left for the disloyalty or imprudence of your servant; if we have enough left to do what we propose

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato*.

[2] Many have taught deception through fear of being deceived, and by their suspicion have justified others in doing evil. — Seneca, *Epistle* 3.

to do,[1] let us let this surplus of the liberality of Fortune pass a little the more at her mercy, (*c*) as the gleaner's portion. After all, I do not value the fidelity of my people so much as I despise their harmfulness. (*b*) Oh, it is a mean and foolish study, the study of one's money, the pleasure of handling it and counting it over and over! It is thus that avarice draws nigh.

In the eighteen years [2] that I have had property in charge, I have never been able to prevail upon myself to examine either my title-deeds or my principal affairs, which should necessarily pass under my knowledge and attention. This is not from a philosophic scorn of transitory and mundane things; my taste is not so refined, and I value them at least as much as they are worth; but it certainly is inexcusable and puerile sloth and negligence. (*c*) What would I not do rather than read a contract; and rather than, the slave of my affairs, — or, still worse, of those of another, — disturb those dusty old papers, as there are many who do for money? I hold nothing costly save care and labour, and I seek only to become indifferent and inactive. (*b*) I was, I think, better adapted to live on somebody else's fortune, if it could be done without obligation and without servitude; and indeed I am not sure, on close scrutiny, whether, considering my disposition and my lot, what I have to endure with affairs, servants, and the household has not in it more that is abject, importunate, and bitter than to be in the service of a man born to higher station than I, who would guide me somewhat at my ease. (*c*) *Servitus obedientia est fracti animi et abjecti, arbitrio carentis suo.*[3] (*b*) Crates did worse, who cast himself into the freedom of poverty, to be rid of the indignities and burdens of a house. That I would not do; I hate poverty not less than pain; but indeed I would change this kind of life for a humbler and less busied one. When I am away from home, I cast off all thoughts of such things; and I should then feel less the ruin of a tower than I feel, when on the spot, the fall of a tile. My mind

[1] *S'il nous en reste en gros de quoy faire nostre effect.*

[2] This "eighteen years" dates this part, at least, of the Essay in 1586.

[3] Servitude is the obedience of a broken and abject spirit that has no will of its own. — Cicero, *Paradoxa*, V, 1.

is easily managed when I am absent, but, when I am at home, it suffers like that of a peasant; (*c*) a rein twisted on my horse, an end of a stirrup-leather striking against my leg, will spoil my pleasure all day; (*b*) I can raise my courage well enough to meet discomforts; my eyes, I can not.

Sensus! O superi, sensus![1]

I am answerable in my own house for every thing that goes ill. Few masters — I speak of those of medium condition like myself, and if there are any, they are more fortunate than I — can so depend upon another that a large part of the burden does not remain on their shoulders. (*c*) This easily impairs somewhat my behaviour in entertaining unexpected guests; and I have been able, perchance, like a tiresome host, to detain some of them more by my table than by my charms. (*b*) And this household care detracts much from the pleasure which I ought to take in the visiting and assembling of any friends at my house. The most unsuitable bearing of a gentleman in his own house is to see him occupied about the carrying out of his orders,[2] whispering in the ear of one servant, threatening another with his eye; the service should glide on insensibly, and present an every-day course; and I think it unbecoming for a man to hold talk with his guests, whether in a way of excuse or of boasting, about the entertainment that is offered them. I love orderliness and neatness, —

Et cantharus et lanx
Ostendunt mihi me,[3] —

rather than abundance, and at home I pay careful attention to what is necessary, very little to outward show. If in another man's house a servant begins a quarrel, if a dish is upset, you merely laugh about it; you sleep while my lord arranges matters with his steward for your next day's entertainment. (*c*) I speak of these things as they seem to me, not failing to recognise in general how agreeable a pleasure to certain natures is a peaceable, prosperous house-

[1] The senses! O ye gods, the senses! — Source unknown.

[2] *De l'ordre de sa police.*

[3] My tankard and my dish shew me my face. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 5.23. The true text is: *Ostendat tibi te.*

hold, directed according to a well-ordered system; for I do not wish to attach to this matter my own mistakes and mishaps, or to gainsay Plato, who considers it to be the most fortunate occupation for every man "to carry on his private affairs without injustice." [1]

(*b*) When I travel, I have to think only of myself and of the spending of my money, which is disposed of by a single precept. Too many elements are required in amassing it; I understand nothing at all about that. About spending it I understand a little, and how to display my expenditure, which is in truth its principal use; but I look after it too ambitiously, which renders it irregular and disproportionate, and, besides, extravagant on both sides. If the occasion makes a show, if it serves the purpose, I indiscreetly let myself go, and I draw back no less indiscreetly if it is not brilliant and does not shine upon me.

Whether it be an acquired tendency, or nature,[2] which imprints in us this condition of living in relation to others, it does us more harm than good. We defraud ourselves of what is useful to ourselves in creating appearances in accordance with common opinion. We are not so much concerned as to what our existence is in ourselves and in fact, as we are as to what it is in public observation. Even the goods of the mind, and wisdom itself, seem to us fruitless if it[3] be enjoyed only by ourselves, if it be not brought forward to the eyes and approbation of others. There are men in whom gold flows in great streams through underground passages, imperceptibly; others stretch it all out into plates and sheets; so that, with these, farthings count for crowns; with those, the opposite, the world esteeming the usefulness and value according to the display. All overcareful attention to riches savours of avarice; even their distribution and a too systematic and artificial liberality are not worth a laborious watchfulness and solicitude. He who chooses to make his outlay accurate makes it narrow and limited. Keeping and spending are unimportant matters, and take on the colour of good or evil only according to their relation to our will.

[1] See Plato, *Letter* 9 (to Archytas).

[2] *Qui que ce soit, ou art ou nature.*

[3] That is, wisdom.

The other cause that invites me to these excursions is my disagreement with the present conditions of our State. I could easily console myself for its corruption, so far as regards the public interest, —

> Pejoraque sæcula ferri
> Temporibus, quorum sceleri non invenit ipsa
> Nomen, et a nullo posuit natura metallo,[1] —

but as regards my own, I can not. I am especially preoccupied by it because in my neighbourhood, in consequence of the long-continued license of these civil wars, we have now become familiar [2] with so disordered a form of government,

> Quippe ubi fas versum atque nefas,[3]

that in truth it is a marvel that it can be maintained;

> Armati terram exercent, semperque recentes
> Convectare juvat prædas et vivere rapto.[4]

In fine, I see by our example that human society holds together and becomes united under all conditions; however men may for a time be situated, they form masses and come into order by stirring about and gathering themselves together, just as ill-fitting bodies which are packed up together without arrangement find of themselves a way to unite and settle into their proper places, often better than art could have arranged them. King Philip made an assemblage of the most wicked and incorrigible men he could find, and placed them all in a city which he had built for them and which bore their name.[5] It is my belief that they fashioned among themselves from their very vices a political framework and a congruous and regular society. I see not

[1] An age worse than the age of iron, for whose crimes Nature herself can find no name, and has taken none from any metal. — Juvenal, XIII, 28.

[2] *Nous sommes tantost . . . envieillis.*

[3] In which right and wrong have changed places. — Virgil, *Georgics*, I, 505.

[4] All armed they till the ground, and they take delight always in collecting fresh plunder, and in living on booty. — Idem, *Æneid*, VII, 748.

[5] Poneropolis — city of criminals; later, Philipopolis. See Plutarch, *Of Curiosity;* Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, IV, 11.

one action, or three, or a hundred, but customs in common and received usage, so savage especially in inhumanity and in treachery (which is to me the worst of vices), that I have not the courage to conceive them without horror, and I marvel at them almost as much as I detest them. The practice of these signal crimes marks mental vigour and force as much as error and disorder. Necessity accords them and brings them together. This fortuitous union takes shape later in laws; for there have been some as barbarous as any human thought can conceive, which nevertheless have maintained their faith with as much soundness and length of life as those of Plato and Aristotle could have done. And in truth all such picturings, artificially devised, of forms of government are absurd and unfit to be put into practice.

These intense and long-continued altercations concerning the best form of society and the rules best adapted to bind us are altercations suitable only to exercise our wits; just as in the learning of the schools [1] many subjects have their being in excitement and in discussion and have no life outside that. Such ideas about government [2] would be acceptable in a new world; but we have to deal with one already fitted and shaped to certain customs; we do not engender them as did Pyrrha or Cadmus. By whatever means we have the power to amend it and dispose it anew, we can hardly wrench it from its accustomed bent without altogether shattering it. Solon was asked whether he had established for the Athenians the best laws that he could. "Yes, truly," he answered, "of those that they would have accepted." [3] (*c*) Varro excuses himself in the same tone: that, if he had to write of religion as something wholly new, he would say what he thought about it; but, it being already accepted, he will speak rather of its practice than of its nature.[4]

(*b*) Not in theory merely, but in truth, the most excellent and best form of government for each nation is that under which it has been maintained. Its form and essential utility depend upon customs. We are apt to be dissatisfied

[1] *Ès arts.* [2] *Telle peinture de police.*
[3] See Plutarch, *Life of Solon.*
[4] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, VI, 4.

with present conditions; but none the less I hold that to desire in a democracy the supreme control of a few, or in a monarchy another kind of government, is wrong and foolish.

> Ayme l'Estat tel que tu le vois estre;
> S'il est royal, ayme la royauté;
> S'il est de peu, ou bien communauté,
> Ayme l'aussi, car Dieu t'y a faict naistre.[1]

Thus wrote the excellent monsieur de Pibrac, whom we have just lost — of an intelligence so agreeable, opinions so sound, a character so delightful. This loss, and that which we suffered at the same time in the death of monsieur de Foix,[2] are important losses to our crown. I do not know if there is left in France another pair to take the place of these two Gascons in the council of our kings, equal to them in integrity and ability. They were souls admirable in different ways, and assuredly, considering the times, each rare and admirable in his kind. But what housed them in this age, so unsuited and out of keeping as they were with our corruptions and our tumults?

Nothing so weighs upon a state as does innovation; mere change gives shape to injustice and tyranny. When a structure is weakened, we can prop it; we can prevent the impairment and decay natural to all things from removing us too far from our beginnings and our principles; but to undertake to remould so great a mass and to change the foundation of so great a structure is to do like those who, to cleanse, efface; who propose to reform special defects by a universal confusion, and to cure maladies by death, (*c*) *non tam commutandarum quam evertendarum rerum cupidi*.[3] (*b*) The world is ill adapted to cure itself; it is so impatient of what constrains it that it aims only at ridding

[1] Love the State as you find it existing: if it be a monarchy, love royalty; if it be an oligarchy, or a commonwealth, love that no less, for God caused you to be born in it. — Gui du Faur, seigneur de Pibrac. He was of Toulouse, and died in 1584, aged 55.

[2] Paul de Foix (1528–1584), to whom Montaigne dedicated La Boëtie's poems, which he published in 1570.

[3] Desiring not so much to change things as to overturn them. — Cicero, *De Off.*, II, 1.

itself of it, without considering at what price. We see by a thousand examples that it is generally cured at its own expense. Relief from immediate illness is no cure, if there be not a general amendment of conditions. (*c*) The surgeon's object is not to kill the diseased flesh; that is but the means for its healing; he looks further, to making the natural soundness exist again and to restoring the organ to its proper state. Whoever proposes merely to get rid of what is preying upon him falls short; for good does not necessarily succeed ill; another and a worse ill may follow; as happened to the slayers of Cæsar, who brought the commonwealth to such a pass that they had to repent of having intermeddled. To many men since, even in our own time, it has happened in like manner; Frenchmen of my age know well what to say about this. All great mutations shake a state and disorder it.

He who should aim straight at a cure and should consider carefully about it before doing any thing would be likely to grow cool about putting his hand to it. Pacuvius Calavius corrected the imperfection of such a course by a notable example.[1] His fellow citizens had rebelled against their magistrates; he, being a personage of great influence in the city of Capus, found means one day to confine the Senate in the palace;[2] and, calling the people together on the public square, he said to them that the day had come when with perfect freedom they could take vengeance on the tyrants who had for so long a time oppressed them, whom he held at his mercy, alone and unarmed; he was of opinion that they should be drawn by lot, one after another, and that each one should be specially dealt with, whatever might be decreed being carried out immediately; provided also that at the same time they should take thought to establish in the place of the condemned some worthy man, so that the office should not be left vacant. They had no sooner heard the name of a senator than there arose an outcry of general dissatisfaction with him. "I see clearly," said Pacuvius, "that we must remove this one;

[1] This is carelessly phrased in the original. Montaigne means that Pacuvius followed the right course.

[2] That is, the government house.

he is a bad man; let us have a good man instead of him." There was immediate silence, every one being much embarrassed about the selection. When one bolder than the others first named his choice, there was heard an even greater unanimity of voices for rejecting this one, proclaiming a hundred imperfections and just reasonings for repelling him. This opposing temper becoming inflamed, it was even worse for the second senator and the third; as great discord about the election as agreement about the dismissal. Having uselessly wearied themselves in this confusion, they began, one here, one there, to steal away little by little from the assembly, each carrying away in his mind this conviction, that the oldest and best-known evil is always more endurable than one new and untried.[1]

(*b*) Although I see that we are pitiably perturbed — for what have we not done! —

> Eheu! cicatricum et sceleris pudet
> Fratrumque; quid nos dura refugimus
> Ætas? Quid intactum nefasti
> Liquimus? unde manum juventus
> Metu Deorum continuit? quibus
> Pepercit aris? [2]

I do not instantly make up my mind;

> Ipsa si velit Salus,
> Servare prorsus non potest hanc familiam; [3]

we are not perchance at our last stage.

The conservation of states is a thing which seemingly exceeds our intelligence. (*c*) A civil government, as Plato says, is a puissant thing and one difficult of dissolution; [4] it often endures, notwithstanding deadly internal diseases, notwithstanding the injury of unjust laws, notwithstanding

[1] See Livy, XXIII, 3.

[2] Alas, for the shame of our scars and our crimes and our fratricidal wars! What has our cruel age shunned? What sin have we left undone? From what guilt have our youths, restrained by fear of the gods, withheld their hands? What altars have they spared? — Horace, *Odes*, I, 35.33.

[3] If the goddess Safety herself wished to save this family, she could not do it. — Terence, *Adelphi*, IV, 7.43.

[4] See Plato, *Republic*, book VIII.

tyranny, notwithstanding the excesses and ignorance of magistrates, the license and sedition of the populace. (*b*) In all our fortunes we compare ourselves with what is above us and look toward those that are better than ours; let us measure ourselves by what is below us; there is no one so forlornly wretched [1] that he may not find a thousand examples with which to console himself. (*c*) It is an imperfection in us that we see more unreadily what is above us than readily what is below us.[2] (*b*) Yet Solon said, "Were all ills heaped up together, there is no one who would not choose rather to bear with him the ills that he has than to have an equitable division with all other men of this heap of ills, and to take his several portion of them." [3] Our state is in ill health, but there have been others sicker that have not died. The gods use us like tennis balls and toss us hither and yon.

Enimvero dii nos homines quasi pilas habent.[4]

The stars have fatally destined the Roman state as an example of what they can accomplish in this kind; it comprises in itself all the conditions and chances that befall a state, all that established usage can effect in it, and disturbance, and good-fortune and ill-fortune. What state should despair of its condition, seeing the shocks and commotions wherewith that one was agitated, and which it withstood? If extent of dominion be the health of a state (of which I am in no wise assured,—[*c*] and Isocrates gives me pleasure when he instructs Nicocles not to envy princes who have great dominions but such as know how to maintain those which have fallen to them),[5] — (*b*) that one was never so healthy as when it was most sick. The worst

[1] *Si malotru.* [2] See Seneca, *Epistle* 73.

[3] See Plutarch, *Consolation to Apollonius.* Plutarch attributes the saying to Socrates, and so did Montaigne in 1588; but on the Bordeaux copy he substituted Solon, "perhaps," says M. Villey, "on the authority of Valerius Maximus (VII, 2, *ext.* 2)."

[4] The gods treat us men like balls. — Plautus, *Captivi*, Prologue, 22.

[5] This refers to a passage in a letter from Isocrates the philosopher to Nicocles, King of the Cyprians. Montaigne, not reading Greek, must have taken it from some other source than the original. Translated, the passage reads: "Envy not those who have the widest rule, but those who use to the best purpose the power they possess."

period of its government was for it the most fortunate one. We can scarcely recognise the image of any government under the first emperors; it is the most horrible and the most dense confusion that can be imagined. Nevertheless, the state endured it and continued to exist, maintaining, not a monarchy restricted to its limits, but one composed of many nations very different from one another, very distant, very ill-disposed, very irregularly ruled and unjustly conquered.

Nec gentibus ullis
Commodat in populum, terræ pelagique potentem,
Invidiam fortuna suam.[1]

Every thing that totters does not fall. The frame of so great a body holds by more than one nail; it holds even by its antiquity, like old buildings without plastering and without mortar whose foundations time has purloined, which yet, for all that, exist and are upheld by their own weight;

Nec jam validis radicibus hærens,
Pondere tuta suo est.[2]

Moreover, it is not a wise proceeding to inspect only the flanking fortification and the moat in order to judge of the strength of a place; we must observe how it can be reached and in what condition the assailant is. Few vessels sink of their own weight and without outside violence. Now, if we turn our eyes on all sides, every thing around us is crumbling; look at all the great states, whether of Christendom or elsewhere, which we know about; you will find a manifest menace of change and ruin;

Et sua sunt illis incommoda, parque per omnes
Tempestas.[3]

Astrologers run no chances in warning us, as they do, of great impending alterations and mutations; their presages

[1] And Fortune does not allow any nation to nourish its hatred against a people that rules land and sea. — Lucan, I, 82.

[2] Clinging by roots no longer strong, it is made safe by its own weight. — *Ibid.*, 138.

[3] They have their own misfortunes, and the same storm awaits them all. — Adapted from Virgil, *Æneid*, XI, 422: *Sunt illis sua funera, parque per omnes tempestas.*

are in view and palpable — there is no need of going for them to the skies. We have reason to derive not only consolation from this universal companionship in ills and menaces, but also some hope for the duration of our state, forasmuch as naturally nothing falls where every thing falls; universal sickness is individual health; conformity is a quality hostile to dissolution. For my own part, I do not at all yield to despair, and it seems to me that I see paths by which we can be saved.

Deus hæc fortasse benigna
Reducet in sedem vice.[1]

Who knows but that God may have it happen that it shall be as with our bodies, which are purged and brought to a better condition by long and grievous sicknesses, which give back to them a more entire and purer health than that of which they deprive them? What depresses me most is that, in reckoning the symptoms of our malady, I see amongst them as many natural ones and of those which heaven sends us and which evidently came thence,[2] as of those which our unreasonableness and human unwisdom contribute to it. (*c*) It seems as if the stars themselves ordain that we have lasted long enough, and beyond the ordinary term; and this also depresses me, that the nearest ill that threatens us is not an alteration of the whole and solid mass, but its dispersion and disintegration, the extremest of our fears.

(*b*) And in these very musings I fear the treachery of my memory, that inadvertently it may have caused me to record the same thing twice. I hate to scrutinise my work, and never but with reluctance review what has once escaped me. Now I bring hither nothing of new attainment; these are familiar ideas; since I have conceived them perchance a hundred times, I am afraid that I have already set them down. Repetition is tiresome everywhere, though it were in Homer; but it is fatal in subjects that have only a superficial and passing exhibition. I am annoyed by inculcation,

[1] Perhaps some god will restore these things to their place by a propitious change. — Horace, *Epodes*, XIII, 7.

[2] *De ceux que le ciel nous envoye et proprement siens.*

even in profitable matters, as in Seneca; (*c*) and I am annoyed by the custom of the Stoic school, of repeating in all their length and breadth, on every subject, the principles and presuppositions which are of general application, and of constantly alleging anew common and universal arguments and reasonings. (*b*) My memory becomes cruelly worse every day,

> Pocula Lethæos ut si ducentia somnos
> Arente fauce traxerim.[1]

It will be necessary henceforth (God be praised, down to this moment there has been no mishap!) that, whereas others seek time and occasion to think what they have to say, I avoid preparation, for fear of binding myself to some obligation on which I may have to depend. To be bound and obliged, and to depend upon so weak an instrument as my memory, makes me miss the way. I never read the following narrative that I do not feel a personal and natural emotion. Lyncestes, accused of conspiring against Alexander, on the day when he was brought before the army, according to custom, to be heard in his own defence, had in his head a studied harangue, of which, very hesitatingly and stammeringly, he pronounced a few words. As he grew more and more confused, whilst he struggled gropingly with his memory, lo, he was attacked and killed with their pikes by the soldiers nearest to him, who regarded him as convicted; his agitation and his silence were to them confession.[2] Having had in prison so much leisure to prepare himself, it is not in their opinion memory that fails him; his conscience ties his tongue and deprives him of strength. Truly this is evident — that the place, the bystanders, the suspense, are agitating, even when it is only a matter of ambition to speak well; what becomes of a man when it is a public speech on which his life depends?

For my part, the very fact that I am fettered to what I have to say serves to loose me from it. When I commit and entrust myself wholly to my memory, I lean so heavily upon her that I oppress her; the burden affrights her. In

[1] As if I had drained with parched throat the cups that bring the slumber of Lethe. — Horace, *Epodes*, XIV, 3.

[2] See Quintus Curtius, VII, 1.94.

proportion as I rely upon her, I become so out of myself as to test my composure, and I have found it difficult sometimes to conceal the servitude in which I was immured; whereas my purpose is to exhibit in speaking great carelessness (*c*) in tone and visage, (*b*) and fortuitous and unpremeditated gestures, as if born of the immediate occasion; liking better to say nothing worth while than to seem to have come prepared to speak well — a misbecoming thing, especially in men of my profession,[1] (*c*) and one that imposes too great constraint on him who can not retain much. Preparation gives more to be hoped for than it brings forth; often a man foolishly strips to his doublet, to leap no better than in his long coat;[2] *nihil est his qui placere volunt tam adversarium quam expectatio.*[3] (*b*) It is recorded of the orator Curio that when he undertook to divide his oration into three parts, or four, or into the number equal to that of his arguments and reasonings, it easily happened to him to forget some one of them or to add one or two more to them.[4] I have always carefully avoided falling into this mishap, detesting such earnests and prescriptions; not only from distrust of my memory, but also because that method is too much like artifice. (*c*) *Simpliciora militares decent.*[5] (*b*) Suffice it that I have now promised myself never again to assume the burden of speaking in public;[6] since, as for speaking by reading one's manuscript, besides its being very unsuitable, it is a great disadvantage to those who can by nature produce some effect by gestures; and still less would I throw myself on the mercy of my ability to speak extemporaneously;[7] that is in me a heavy and obscure quality, which can not give aid in sudden and important necessities.

Reader, let this apprentice work[8] run on, and this third prolongation of the remaining portions of my picture. I add, but I do not correct.[9] In the first place, because he

[1] That is, the military profession.

[2] *En saye.*

[3] He who wishes to please has no enemy so potent as tardiness. — Cicero, *Academica*, II, 4.

[4] See Idem, *Brutus*, LX.

[5] Simplicity becomes soldiers. — Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, XI, 1.

[6] *En lieu de respect.* [7] *Mon invention presente.*

[8] *Ce coup d'essay.*

[9] He means that he does not alter the expression of his thoughts. Cf. a similar statement at the beginning of Book II, chap. 37 (Vol. III, p. 194).

who has hypothecated his work to the world seems to me to have no longer any rights in it; let him, if he can, utter himself better elsewhere, and not vitiate the work that he has sold to us. Nothing of the work of such men should be bought until after their death. Let them consider it carefully before publishing it; what hurries them? (*c*) My book is always the same, save that, when they set about dressing it up again in order that the purchaser may not go away with hands quite empty, I permit myself to attach to it (as it is only ill-laid mosaic) some supernumerary bits. They are mere overweight trifles, which do not damn the first form, but give some value to each of the following ones by a little, sought-for detail.[1] Thence, however, it may easily happen that some transposition of chronology is involved, my narrations taking their places according to their occasion, not always according to their age.

(*b*) In the second place, because as regards myself I fear to lose by change, my intelligence does not always go forward: sometimes it goes backward too. I distrust my ideas scarcely less when they are the second or third than the first, or to-day's, not yesterday's. We oftentimes correct ourselves as foolishly as we correct others.

I have grown older by a number of years since my first publication, (*c*) which was in the year one thousand five hundred and eighty; (*b*) but I doubt whether I am one whit wiser. (*c*) Myself now and myself then are two persons; which the better? I do not at all know. It would be a fine thing to be old if we progressed only toward improvement; it is the motion of a drunken man, staggering, dizzy, tortuous, or of reeds which the wind sways casually as it lists. Antiochus had written vigorously in favor of the Academy; in his old age he took the opposite side;[2] whichever of the two I should follow, would it not always be following Antiochus? After having established the doubtfulness of human opinions, to seek to establish their certainty — was it not to establish doubt, not certainty, and to promise that, were another term of life given him, he would always be on the point of fresh changes, not so much better as different?

(*b*) Public favour has given me a little more courage than

[1] *Petite subtilité ambitieuse.* [2] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 22.

I could hope for; but what I dread most is to be wearisome; I should like better to spur than to fatigue, as a learned man of my time has done; praise is always agreeable, no matter from whom or why it comes; yet, would we be rightly pleased by it, it is needful to be informed of its cause. Imperfections even have a way of being commended. Public and general esteem is seen to be lucky in hitting its mark; and I am mistaken if in my day the worst writings are not those which have won the most popular favour. Assuredly I return thanks to the estimable men who deign to take my feeble efforts in good part; nowhere are faults in execution so apparent as in a matter that in itself has nothing to recommend it. Do not, reader, blame me for those which slip in here through the whim or carelessness of others; each hand, each workman, contributes his share. I do not meddle with orthography, but simply bid them follow the old forms; nor with punctuation; I am far from expert with either. When they [1] wholly spoil the sense, I give myself little concern about it, for at least they exonerate me; but when they substitute a false meaning, as they so often do, and alter me according to their understanding, they ruin me. Howbeit, whenever the sentence does not measure up to my strength, an estimable man should deny it to be mine. Whoever knows how indiligent I am, how I am made after my own fashion, will easily believe that I would more willingly indite anew as many more Essays than subject myself to going over these again for such trivial corrections.

I was saying then, just now, that, being fixed in the deepest mine of this new metal,[2] not only am I debarred from much familiarity with persons of other natures and of other opinions than mine, by which they are held together as by a tie which governs every other tie, but also I am not without risk among those to whom every thing is equally permissible and of whom the greater part can not now render worse their dealings with our laws, whence arises the last degree of license. Considering all the special circumstances that concern me, I find no man of our party to whom ad-

[1] The printers.

[2] He refers to the passage on p. 149, *supra*, where he quotes Juvenal: *et a nullo posuit natura metallo.*

herence to the laws costs more than to me, both in cessation of profit and the emergence of loss,[1] as the lawyers say. (*c*) And some there be who make a show of their worth with their ardour and eagerness, who, fairly weighed, do much less than I. (*b*) My house, being a house which is at all times open, much frequented, and friendly, — for I have never allowed myself to be led into making it an instrument of war, which I go in search of most readily[2] when it is farthest from my neighbourhood, — has well deserved general good-will, and it would be very difficult to crow over me on my own dung-heap; and I consider it a wonderful and exemplary achievement that it is still unstained by blood and pillage during so long-continued a tempest and so many near-by changes and commotions. For, to say truth, it was possible for a man of my disposition to evade a uniform and continuous condition of things, whatever it might be; but the mutually opposing invasions and incursions, and the alternations and vicissitudes of fortune round about me, have to the present time rather exasperated than pacified the temper of the country and surcharged me with invincible difficulties and dangers. I escape, but it does not please me that it should be by good luck, and indeed by my own prudence, rather than by justice; and it does not please me to be outside the protection of the laws and under other safeguard than theirs. As things are, I live more than half by the favour of others, which is a harsh indebtedness. I do not like to owe my safety either to the good-will and benignity of the great, to whom my loyalty and my liberty are acceptable, or to the liberal character of my predecessors and of myself; for what if I were different? If my demeanour and the frankness of my intercourse are of service to my neighbours or my kindred, it is a cruel thing that they can acquit themselves by letting me live, and that they can say: (*c*) "We allow him freely to continue divine service in the chapel of his house, all the churches hereabout being ruined by us; and we permit him the use of his property and his life, (*b*) as he safeguards our women and our cattle in case of need."

[1] *Lucro cessante, emergente damno.*

[2] In 1588: *à laquelle je me mesle plus volontiers.*

For successive generations[1] my house has shared the honour of Lycurgus the Athenian, who was the general depositary and keeper of the purses of his fellow citizens.[2] Now I hold that a man's life should depend on law and public authority, not be a matter of recompense or of favour. How many gallant men have chosen rather to lose life than to be indebted for it! I shrink from subjecting myself to any kind of obligation, but especially to such as binds me by the claims of honour. I find nothing so costly as that which is given to me, and this is because my will remains pledged under the name of gratitude; and I am the more willing to accept services that are for sale. That is not surprising:[3] for these I give only money; for the others I give myself.

The tie that holds me by the law of courtesy seems to me much tighter and stronger than that of legal compulsion. I am more agreeably tied up by a notary than by myself. Is it not reasonable that my conscience should be much more pledged by that which has been simply entrusted to it? In other cases, my loyalty owes nothing, for nothing has been lent to it; let support be had from the confidence and security derived from outside sources. I should find it much easier[4] to break from the prison of a stone wall and of the laws than from my word. (*c*) I am punctilious even to superstition in keeping my promises, and on all subjects I preferably make them vague and conditional. To those which are of no weight I give weight by devotion to my discipline;[5] it torments and burdens me with its own importance. Indeed, in any undertaking wholly my own and free, if I tell its object it seems to me that I prescribe it to myself, and that making it known to others is to impose it upon myself; it seems to me that I promise it when I tell it, and so I air my plans but little. (*b*) My condemnation of myself is sharper and more severe than that of those who judge me, who deal with me only according to the aspect of common obligation; the constraint of my conscience is closer and more strict; I follow laggingly those duties to

[1] *De longue main.*
[2] See Plutarch, *Lives of the ten orators* (Lycurgus).
[3] *Je crois bien.*
[4] *J'aymeroy bien plus cher.*
[5] *De la jalousie de ma regle.*

which I should be driven if I did not go to them. (*c*) *Hoc ipsum ita justum est quod recte fit, si est voluntarium.*[1] (*b*) If the action has not some glamour of freedom, it has neither grace nor honour.

Quod me jus cogit, vix voluntate impetrent;[2]

Where necessity draws me I like to relax my will, *quia quicquid imperio cogitur exigenti magis quam præstanti acceptum refertur.*[3] I know some who carry this attitude even to injustice, who give sooner than restore, lend sooner than pay, do good in niggardly fashion to him to whom they are beholden. I do not go so far, but I come near it. I so desire to disburden and relieve myself of obligation that I have sometimes counted as gain the ingratitude, wrongs, and affronts that I have received from those toward whom, either by nature or by accident, I had some indebtedness of friendship, seizing this occasion of their fault as so much acquittal and discharge of my debt. Although I continue to pay them the manifest duties of common reason, I find nevertheless a great saving (*c*) in doing from justice what I had been doing from good-will, and (*b*) in being a little relieved from attention and solicitude in my inward mind, and from the inner binding force of my good-will,[4] — (*c*) *est prudentis sustinere, ut cursum, sic impetum benevolentiæ,*[5] — (*b*) which is too urgent and pressing when I yield to it, at least for a man who does not wish to be at all pledged; and this thriftiness[6] serves as some consolation for the imperfections of those who approach me. I regret that they are less worthy of my attention and engagements to them; but, however that may be, I thereby am saved some part of it. I regard as reasonable the man who is less fond of his child

[1] Even an act that is rightly done is just only if it is voluntary. — Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 9.

[2] What duty compels me to do, I can hardly be induced to do voluntarily. — Terence, *Adelphi*, III, 5.44.

[3] Because whatever is required by authority is credited to him who requires rather than to him who obeys. — Valerius Maximus, II, 2.6.

[4] The last clause was omitted in 1595.

[5] It is the part of a wise man, just as he holds back a horse in a race, to restrain the first impulse of friendship. — Cicero, *De Amicitia*, XVII.

[6] He refers to what he calls the acquittal of his debt.

if he be scrofulous or misshapen, and not only when he is knavish, but also when he is unlucky and ill-begotten (God himself has diminished by so much his value and natural worth), provided that in this lack of affection he carries himself with moderation and with exact justice. For me, proximity does not lessen imperfections, but rather makes them worse.

All things considered, according to my apprehension of the art of good deeds and gratitude, which is a subtle art and of constant employ, I see no man more free and less indebted than I am at this hour.[1] What I owe, I owe simply because of common and natural obligations; there is no man who is otherwise more entirely free;

> Nec sunt mihi nota potentum
> Munera.[2]

Princes (*c*) give me much if they take nothing from me, and (*b*) do me enough good when they do me no harm; that is all that I ask of them. Oh, how beholden I am to God that it has pleased him that I should receive directly by his favour all I have! That he has specially kept in his own possession all my debts! (*c*) How earnestly I implore his sacred compassion that I may never owe essential things[3] to any one! Most fortunate freedom that has accompanied me so far — may it continue to the end! (*b*) I endeavour to have no special need of any one; (*c*) *in me omnis spes est mihi;*[4] (*b*) this is something that every man can effect for himself, but those more easily whom God has placed beyond the reach of natural and urgent necessities. It is very pitiful and hazardous to depend on another. We ourselves, to whom we can address ourselves for and with the most reason and sureness, are not sufficiently secure.[5]

[1] Grün states that Montaigne wrote on the Bordeaux copy of 1588, and then erased: *Jamais roy ne me dona un double en paiement ni en don.*

[2] Nor are gifts of the mighty known to me. — Virgil, *Æneid*, XII, 519. Montaigne interpolated the words *sunt mihi.*

[3] *Un essentiel grammercy.*

[4] All my hope is in myself. — A paraphrase of Terence, *Adelphi*, III, 5.9: *In te spes omnis, Hegio, nobis sita est.*

[5] *Nous mesmes, qui est la plus juste adresse et la plus seure, ne nous sommes pas assez asseurez.* Some such paraphrase as suggested seems necessary; the meaning is very obscure.

I have nothing of mine but myself, and indeed my possession of myself is partly defective and borrowed. I strive to improve myself (*c*) in spirit, which is the most important, and also (*b*) in fortune, that I may find thus the means to content myself should all else abandon me. (*c*) Eleus Hippias provided himself, not only with learning, that in time of need he might be able happily to withdraw, in the lap of the Muses, from all other companionship; nor only with a knowledge of philosophy, to teach his soul to be content with itself and, when faith so ordains, manfully to do without the pleasures that come to it from outside. He was so careful as also to learn to cook for himself, to cut his hair, to make his garments, his shoes, his breeches, that he might depend on himself as far as possible, and be free of assistance from others.[1] (*b*) We enjoy borrowed satisfaction [2] much more freely and gladly when our enjoyment is not forced and compelled by need, and when we have both in our will and in our fortune the strength and the means to do without them.

(*c*) I know myself well; and it is difficult for me to imagine any such pure liberality toward me in any one, any hospitality so bountiful and gratuitous that it would not seem to me disastrous, cruel, and tainted with disgrace, if necessity had fettered me in it. As giving is of an ostentatious nature and a mark of superiority, so accepting is of the nature of submission; witness the insulting and contentious refusal that Bajazet made of the gift that Temir sent him;[3] and those that were offered by the Emperor Solyman to the Emperor of Calicut so angered him that he not only rudely refused them, saying that neither he nor his predecessors were accustomed to receive and that it was their office to give, but, moreover, had the ambassadors sent for this purpose cast into a dungeon.[4] When Thetis, Aristotle says, flatters Jupiter,[5] when the Lacedæmonians flatter the Athenians, they do not undertake to refresh their memory of the bene-

[1] See Plato, *Hippias Minor;* Cicero, *De Oratore*, III, 32.
[2] *Biens estrangers.*
[3] See Chalcondylas, II, 12.
[4] See Goulard, *Histoire du Portugal*, XIX, 6.
[5] See the *Nicomachæan Ethics*, IV, 3, referring to the *Iliad*, I, 503.

fits they have done them, which is always odious, but their memory of the benefits they themselves have received from them. Those persons whom I see employ every one in such friendly fashion, and thereby bind themselves, would not so do if they relished as I do the sweetness of unalloyed liberty, and if they weighed, as much as a wise man should weigh, the burden of an obligation. It is sometimes, perchance, requited, but it is never done away with — a cruel fetter for one who likes to have completely free elbow-room. Those who are acquainted with me, both above and below me in rank, know whether they have ever seen any one less given to soliciting, demanding, begging, or less burdensome to others. If I am so beyond all modern example, it is no great wonder, so many parts of my character contribute thereto. A little natural pride, intolerance of refusal, moderation in my desires and plans, unfitness for every sort of affairs, and my most favorite qualities, — laziness, freedom, — from all these sources I hold in mortal hatred the being beholden to another or having another beholden to me.[1] I eagerly make use of every means in my power to do without the kindness of another before making use of it on any occasion or need, whether trivial or important. My friends annoy me amazingly when they request me to request something of a third person; and it seems to me to cost scarcely less to free myself from some one who is indebted to me, by making use of him, than to become indebted myself to one who owes me nothing. This condition being removed, and this other, that they do not desire of me a matter of business perplexity (for I have declared mortal war against all care), I am readily compliant and prepared for the need of any one. (*b*) I have very gladly sought opportunities to benefit others and attach them to me, and it seems to me that there is no more agreeable use of our means;[2] but I have even more avoided receiving than I have sought to give. (*c*) And according to Aristotle this is much more easy.[3] (*b*) My fortune has allowed me to benefit others but little, and the little that it has allowed

[1] *D'estre tenu ny à autre ny par autre que moy.*
[2] This sentence of 1588 was omitted in 1595.
[3] See the *Nicomachæan Ethics*, IX, 7.

me to do of this sort has been rather poorly placed. Had I been born to high position among men, I should have been ambitious to make myself beloved, not to make myself feared or admired. Shall I express it more arrogantly? I should have considered giving pleasure as much as doing good. (*c*) Cyrus very wisely — as reported by a most excellent captain and still better philosopher [1] — ranks his own kindness at heart and his good deeds far above his valour and his conquests in war; and the elder Scipio, whenever he wishes to set forth his own worth, rates his own mildness and humanity above his prowess and his victories, and has always on his lips this praiseworthy saying, that he gave his enemies as much occasion to love him as he gave his friends.[2]

(*b*) I mean to say then that, if we must needs owe something, it should be by a more legitimate title than that of which I speak, to which the authority of this miserable war binds me, and not for so great a debt as that of my total preservation; [3] this overwhelms me. I have gone to bed in my house a thousand times, imagining that I should be betrayed and done to death that night, compounding with fortune that it might be without terror and not lingering; and I have exclaimed, after my Pater Noster:

Impius hæc tam culta novalia miles habebit? [4]

What remedy is there? This is the place of my birth and of most of my ancestors'; they set their affections and their name upon it.[5] We become enured to all to which we become accustomed, and, in so miserable a condition as ours is, accustomedness has been a very friendly gift from nature; it benumbs our sensitiveness to the sufferance of many ills.

[1] Xenophon; see the *Cyropædeia*, VIII, 4.4.

[2] See Livy, XXXVII, 6 and 25, and XXXVIII, 27.

[3] That is, of both life and fortune.

[4] Shall an impious soldier possess these well-tilled fields? — Virgil, *Eclogues*, I, 71.

[5] This is one of the references to his ancestors which have brought criticism on Montaigne, but which are open to various explanations. Only his father was born at Montaigne, where his grandfather and great-grandfather had lived; and they did not give their name to the place, but took their name from it.

Civil wars have this worse effect than other wars: they turn every man into a sentinel in his own house.

> Quam miserum porta vitam muroque tueri,
> Vixque suæ tutum viribus esse domus![1]

It is a dire extremity to be under constraint even in one's household and domestic repose. This misfortune concerns me more than any one else because of the situation of the place where I am, which is always the foremost and the hindmost in the battery of our disturbances, and peace has never its full aspect there;

> Tum quoque, cum pax est, trepidant formidine belli.[2]

> Quoties pacem fortuna lacessit,
> Hac iter est bellis. Melius, fortuna, dedisses
> Orbe sub Eoo sedem gelidaque sub Arcto,
> Errantesque domos.[3]

I sometimes derive from indifference and negligence power to strengthen myself against these considerations; these conditions also somewhat lead us to a resolute frame of mind. It often happens to me to imagine with some pleasure mortal dangers, and to expect them; I plunge stupidly headlong into death, without considering or recognising it, as into a silent, dark abyss which swallows me in a trice and smothers me in an instant with a puissant sleep full of torpor and painlessness.[4] And in such sudden and violent deaths the result which I foresee from them gives me more of consolation than does the fact of fear. (*c*) They say that, while life is no better for being long, death is better for not being long. (*b*) My repugnance to being dead is less than

[1] How sad to protect one's life with a gate and a wall, and scarcely to be safe in the strength of one's own house! — Ovid, *Tristia*, IV, 1. 69. The text is slightly modified.

[2] Even in peace, they tremble in fear of war. — *Ibid.*, III, 10.67.

[3] As often as Fortune overthrows peace, war enters in. You would have done better, Fortune, to give us a place in the East, or wandering homes under the cold Bear. — Lucan, I, 256, 257, 251, 252. Montaigne substituted *pacem* for *Romam* in the first line.

[4] *Plein d'insipidité et indolence.*

the courage with which I face dying.[1] I wrap myself up and lie close in this storm, which will blind me and whirl me away furiously, with a sudden assault of which I shall be unaware.

Again, if it be true, as some gardeners say,[2] that roses and violets are more odoriferous when they grow near garlic and onions, inasmuch as these suck up and draw into themselves what evil odour there is in the soil, would that thus these depraved natures might breathe in all the venom of my air and region and make it so much the better and purer for me by their proximity that I should not be wholly a loser. This is not the case; but something of it there may be: that goodness is more beautiful and more attractive when it is rare, and that diametrical difference and unlikeness stiffen and confirm well-doing in oneself and fill it with ardour from emulation of what is opposed to it and from desire of renown.

(*c*) Robbers, many thanks to them, bear me no special ill-will; nor I them. I should have to deal with too large a number. Similar consciences lodge under diverse kinds of gowns — similar cruelty, disloyalty, robbery; and so much the worse since they are most cowardly, most secure, and most hidden under the shadow of the laws. I detest an open insult less than that which is treacherous; that which is contentious less than that which is peaceful and lawful. Our fever has suddenly seized a body which it has little impaired; fire was there, flame has broken out; the noise is greater, the evil but little.

(*b*) I usually reply to those who ask me the reason of my travels, that I well know what I fly from but not what I seek. If I am told that amongst strangers there may be as little health, and that their morals are no purer than ours, I reply in the first place that it is hard,

Tam multæ scelerum facies![3]

[1] *Je ne m'estrange pas tant de l'estre mort comme j'entre en confidence avec le mourir.*

[2] See Plutarch, *How one may derive profit from one's foes.*

[3] There are so many forms of crime [amongst us].—Virgil, *Georgics*, I, 506.

secondly, that it is always a gain to change a bad condition for an uncertain one, and that the ills of other peoples can not fret us as do our own.

I would not forget this — that I never am so rebellious against France that I do not regard Paris with admiring eyes. She has ever had my heart from my youth,[1] and it has befallen me as with surpassing things: the more I have seen of other beautiful cities, the more the beauty of this one has power over me, and the more she gains in my affection. I love her for herself, and more in her own being than overlaid with acquired magnificence; I love her tenderly, even to her warts and blemishes. I am a Frenchman only through that great city, great in population, great in the felicity of her situation, but, above all, great and beyond compare in variety and diversity of pleasure; the glory of France and one of the noblest ornaments of the world. May God drive our discords far from her! Undivided and united, I find her protected from all other violence. I warn her that, of all the factions, the worst will be that which shall breed discord in her, and I have no anxiety about her except from herself; and my anxiety for her is as great surely as for any part of this realm. So long as she may endure I shall not lack a refuge in which to stand at bay, one sufficient to make me forget to regret any other refuge.

Not because Socrates said so,[2] but because it is in truth my own disposition, — and perchance to some excess, — I regard all men as my compatriots and embrace a Pole as a Frenchman, making less account of the national, than of the universal and common, bond. I am not much smitten by the charm of a fellow countryman;[3] acquaintances that are wholly new and wholly of my own making seem to me to outvalue these other every-day, fortuitous, neighbourhood acquaintances; pure friendships acquired by us usually surpass those in which the being of the same region or of the same blood joins us. Nature has put us into the world free and unfettered; we imprison ourselves within certain

[1] When Montaigne's father was mayor of Bordeaux he was sent as deputy to the Court, in 1554 or 1555. Michel, then a young man of twenty-one or twenty-two, may have accompanied him.

[2] See Plutarch, *Of Banishment.* Cf. Book I, chap. 26 (Vol. I, p. 211).

[3] *Je ne suis guere feru de la douceur d'un air naturel.*

narrow limits, as did the kings of Persia, who bound themselves to drink no other water than that of the river Choaspes, foolishly renouncing their right of usage over all other streams, and dried up all the rest of the world so far as they were concerned.[1] (*c*) Socrates, toward the end of his life, regarded a sentence of banishment as worse for him than a sentence of death;[2] I think that I shall never be so enfeebled or so rooted in my country that I shall feel the like. Such divine lives have many conceptions which I accept from respect rather than from sympathy; and there are also some so lofty and extraordinary that I can not accept them even from respect, because I can not understand them. This disposition was somewhat of a weakness[3] in a man who regarded the world as his city; it is true that he disdained peregrinations and had hardly set foot outside the territory of Attica.[4] Consider that he found fault with his friends for offering money to redeem his life,[5] and that he refused to come out of prison through the mediation of others, in order not to disobey the laws at a time when they were so very corrupt.[6] These examples are of the first sort[7] to me. Of the second are others which I could find in the same personage; many of these rare examples surpass even my strength of judgement.

(*b*) In addition to these reasons, travelling seems to me a beneficial occupation. The mind is then constantly busied in observing novel and unknown things; and I know no better school, as I have often said,[8] wherein to fashion life, than to set before it incessantly the diversity of so many other lives, opinions, and customs, and to cause

[1] See Plutarch, *Of Banishment.* Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, XXXI, 3) says: "Kings of the *Parthians.*"

[2] See Plato, *Apology.* [3] *Bien tendre.* [4] See Idem, *Crito.*

[5] *Quoy? qu'il plaignoit l'argent de ses amis à desengager sa vie.* See Idem, *Apology.* [6] See Idem, *Crito.*

[7] That is, of those which I accept from respect rather than from sympathy.

[8] Cf. Book I, chap. 26 (Vol. I, p. 205): "For this reason intercourse with men is wonderful for it [education], and travel in foreign countries . . . . chiefly to bring back the characteristics of those nations and their manner of living, and to rub and file our wits against those of others"; also the first sentence of chap. 17 of the same book, Vol. I, p. 93.

it to have a little knowledge of so perpetual a variety of forms of our nature. The body is then neither idle nor wearied, and this moderate motion keeps it in easy breathing. I stay on horseback, without dismounting and without discomfort, subject to colic [1] as I am, eight and ten hours —

Vires ultra sortemque senectæ.[2]

No season is inimical to me, except the parching heat of a scorching sun; for the umbrellas which have been used in Italy from the time of the ancient Romans burden the arms more than they relieve the head. (*c*) I should like to know what was the skill the Persians had, so long ago, in the early days of luxury, in creating fresh air and shade when they chose, as Xenophon says.[3]

(*b*) Change of air and climate does not affect me; all skies are the same to me; I am beaten only by the internal changes which I give rise to in myself; and these occur less frequently while travelling. It is difficult to set me in motion, but when I am once started, I go as far as you please. I fuss as much about small undertakings as great ones, and in preparing for a day's ride to visit a neighbour as for a real journey. I have learned to make my daily stages in the Spanish fashion, without halting — long and reasonable stages; and in the extreme heat I travel at night, between sunset and sunrise. The other fashion, of baiting on the road, dining in a hurly-burly and in haste, especially on short days, is unprofitable. My horses are the better for it; no horse has ever failed me which was able to make the first day's journey with me. I water them everywhere and only look to it that they still have far enough to go to digest the water. My laziness about getting out of bed gives opportunity for my followers to dine at their leisure before we start. For myself, I never dine too late; my appetite comes with eating, and never otherwise; I am never hungry but at table.

[1] That is, the stone.

[2] Beyond the strength allotted to old age. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VI, 114.

[3] Cf. Xenophon, *Cyropædeia*, VIII, 8. All that Xenophon says is: "In summer the shade of trees and of rocks does not satisfy them; but under those, men stand near them with artificial shades contrived on purpose."

People blame me because I have chosen to continue this practice of travelling when married and old. It is the best time for a man to leave his household, when he has put it in the way to go on without him; when he has so ordered it that it in no wise belies its wonted form. It is much more imprudent to go from home leaving in the house a less faithful guardian, and one who may be less careful to provide what is needed.

The most useful and honourable knowledge and occupation for the mother of a family is the knowledge of housewifery. I see some who are miserly, but very few good managers. This is woman's most important quality, and the one which should be sought before all others, as the only dowry which serves to ruin or to save our houses. (*c*) No one need tell me about this; in accordance with what experience has taught me, I require of a married woman, above every other virtue, the virtue of domestic economy. (*b*) I make use of this quality,[1] leaving by my absence the whole management in her hands.[2] I see with indignation, in some households, the husband return home at noon tired out and dishevelled from the turmoil of business, while the wife is still in her dressing-room, having her hair dressed and adorning herself; this is behaving like a queen, and yet as to that I question. It is absurd and unfair that the idleness of our wives should be maintained by our sweat and toil. (*c*) So far as in me lies, it will befall no man to have a more certain, peaceful, and free enjoyment of his property than I.[3] (*b*) If the husband supplies the substance, Nature herself wills that they[4] supply the form. As for the duties of conjugal friendship, which are thought to be wronged by such absences, I do not believe so; on the contrary, it is an intercourse which easily grows cool with a too continuous companionship and which assiduity injures. Every woman who is a stranger seems to us a worthy woman; and we all know by experience that continually being together can not equal the pleasure that

[1] *Je l'en mets au propre.* [2] He is speaking of his wife.

[3] *Il n'adviendra, que je puisse, à personne d'avoir l'usage de ses biens, plus liquide que moy, plus quiete et plus quitte.*

[4] The wives.

we feel in parting and meeting by turns.[1] (*c*) These interruptions fill me with fresh love for my family, and make the resumption of my home life the sweeter to me; the alternation quickens my appetite, first for one, then for the other course. (*b*) I know that friendship has arms long enough to clasp and hold from one end of the world to the other; and especially this,[2] in which there is a constant interchange of services which excite obligation and remembrance thereof.

The Stoics well say that there is so close a connection and relation between wise men that he who dines in France gives nourishment to his companion in Egypt, and that whoever of them but holds out his finger in any place soever, all the wise men on the habitable globe feel that they are assisted.[3] Possession and fruition appertain chiefly to the imagination. (*c*) It embraces more warmly and more persistently that of which it goes in quest than that which we have at hand. Take account of your ordinary musings — you will find that you are most absent from your friend when he is with you; his presence relaxes your attention and sets your thought free to absent itself at any time, on any occasion. (*b*) When in Rome, I keep hold of my house and rule it, and the possessions that I have left there; I see my walls, my trees, and my income rise and fall, almost as well as when I am there;

Ante oculos errat domus, errat forma locorum.[4]

If we enjoy only what we have at hand, farewell to the money in our strong-boxes and to our sons when they are hunting. We wish them nearer. The garden — is that far off? how about half a day's journey? And ten leagues — is that far or near? If that is near, what of eleven, twelve, thirteen? and so step by step. Truly she who thinks to prescribe to her husband that "the fortieth step is the end of the near and the same step begins the far" — I am of opinion that she should stop him midway, —

[1] *A se desprendre et reprendre à secousses.*

[2] That is, "conjugal friendship."

[3] See Plutarch, *Common conceptions against the Stoics.*

[4] Before my eyes wanders my house, wanders also the image of the places I have left. — Ovid, *Tristia*, III, 4.57.

Excludat jurgia finis. . . .
Utor permisso caudæque pilos ut equinæ
Paulatim vello, et demo unum, demo etiam unum,
Dum cadat elusus ratione ruentis acervi,[1] —

and that they should boldly call philosophy to their assistance. To whom it might be objected that since she[2] sees neither one end nor the other of a connection between the too much and the too little, the long and the short, the light and the heavy, the near and the far; since she recognises neither their beginning nor their end, she judges very uncertainly of the middle. (*c*) *Rerum natura nullam nobis dedit cogitationem finium.*[3] (*b*) Are they not still wives and friends of the departed, who are in another world, not merely in the utmost part of this one? We embrace both those who have existed and those who do not yet exist — not the absent only. We did not make an agreement, in marrying, to keep constantly coupled together, like I know not what little animals that we see; (*c*) or, like the bewitched folk of Karenty,[4] after the manner of dogs; and a wife should not have her eyes so greedily fastened upon her husband's front that she can not see his back when need is. (*b*) But would not this saying of that excellent painter of their natures be appropriate in this place, to depict the cause of their lamentations?

Uxor, si cesses, aut te amare cogitat,
Aut tete amari, aut potare, aut animo obsequi,
Et tibi bene esse soli, cum sibi sit male;[5]

[1] Let an end be made of argument. . . . I make use of this concession, and as I pluck the hairs of a horse's tail, I take away gradually one, then another, till the number falls, hoodwinked on the principle of the sorites. — Horace, *Epistles*, II, 1.38, 45–47.

[2] That is, philosophy.

[3] Nature has given us no knowledge of the beginnings of things. — Cicero, *Academica*, II, 29.

[4] A town on the island of Rugen. See Saxo Grammaticus, *History of Denmark*, book XIV.

[5] If you loiter, your wife thinks that you are in love, or that some one else loves you, or that you are drinking, or following your inclinations, and that you alone are enjoying yourself, while she suffers. — Terence, *Adelphi*, I, 1.7.

or may it not be that in themselves opposition and contradiction sustain and nourish him, and that they are accommodated provided they incommode us?

In true friendship, wherein I am well versed, I give myself to my friend more than I draw him to me. I not only prefer to benefit him rather than that he should benefit me, but also that he should benefit himself rather than me; he benefits me most when he benefits himself; and if absence is either agreeable or useful for him, it is much more acceptable to me than his presence; and it is not really absence when there is means of communicating with one another. I have sometimes found our separation useful and agreeable; we better filled our life and extended its possession by being apart; he [1] lived, he enjoyed, he saw, for me, and I for him, as fully as if he had been there; one part remained idle when we were together; we were blended into one; separation as to place made the conjunction of our wills the stronger. This insatiable hunger for the bodily presence denotes a little weakness in the fruition of souls.

As to my being old, which is brought up against me, it is on the contrary for youth to subject itself to commonly held opinions, and to restrain itself because of others. It has the wherewithal to suffice both for people in general and for itself; we have only too much to do for ourselves alone. In proportion as natural enjoyments fail us, let us sustain ourselves by artificial ones. It is injustice to excuse youth for pursuing pleasures and to forbid old age to seek them. (*c*) When I was young I covered over my jocund dispositions with prudence; being old, I do away with melancholy ones by diverting myself. The Platonic laws, indeed, forbid travelling before the age of forty or fifty, to render it more profitable and instructive. I would agree more readily to the second article of the same laws, which prohibits it after sixty.[2] (*b*) "But at so great an age you may never return from such long wandering." What matters that to me? I undertake it neither to return from it nor to complete it. I undertake it solely to keep in motion while motion is agreeable to me, (*c*) and I travel for the sake of travelling. Those who pursue a living or a hare

[1] La Boëtie. [2] See Plato, *Laws*, book XII.

run after them, we say; but they do not intentionally run; those run who run at barriers or to practise for racing;[1] (*b*) my design is in portions throughout; it is not based on great hopes; each day's journey is an end, and my journey through life is carried on in the same way. I have, however, seen many distant places where I could have wished that I had been detained. Why not, if Chrysippus, Cleanthes, Diogenes, Zeno, Antipater, so many wise men of the roughest sect,[2] abandon their country without any occasion to complain of it and solely to enjoy a different atmosphere? Truly the greatest unpleasantness in my peregrinations is that I can not carry with me the resolution to establish my abode wherever I please, and that I must needs always propose to return, in order to accommodate myself to ordinary ideas.

If I feared dying in another place than that of my birth, if I thought that I should die less at ease far from my family and friends, I should hardly go out of France; I should not go outside my parish without dread; I should feel death continually twitching at my throat or my loins. But I am of another temper; death is the same to me everywhere. If, however, I had to choose, my choice would be, I think, that it should be on horseback rather than in bed, away from my house and far from my family and friends. There is more heartbreak than consolation in going to take leave of one's friends. I willingly forget this duty of our social conduct; for of all the offices of friendship this is the only unpleasant one; and I should likewise willingly, myself, when dying, forget to say this eternal farewell. If any comfort is derived from this crowd of bystanders, it involves a hundred discomforts. I have seen many persons dying in very pitiful case, surrounded by all this troop; the throng suffocates them. It is contrary to what is due, and testifies to little affection and little consideration, if you are let die in peace; one vexes your eyes,

[1] *Ceux qui courent un benefice ou un lievre ne courent pas; ceux-là courent qui courent aux barres et pour exercer leur course.* The amplification of the text seems necessary to bring out the sense.

[2] *La secte plus renfroignée.* See Plutarch, *Contradictions of the Stoic philosophers*, and *Of Banishment.*

another your ears, another your mouth; there is not one of your senses or your limbs that they do not assail. Your heart is wrung with pity on hearing the lamentations of friends, and with anger, perchance, on hearing other lamentations, feigned and counterfeit. A man who has always been sensitive is still more so when weakened; in such great need he requires a gentle hand, adapted to his sensations, to relieve him just where he suffers; otherwise, let no attempt at all be made to relieve him.[1] If we need a wise woman [2] to bring us into the world, we have indeed need of a still wiser man to lead us out of it. Such a one, and a friend to boot, one might well buy at a very high price for service on such an occasion.

I have not yet attained that disdainful vigour which is fortified in itself, which nothing either assists or disturbs. I am on a lower level; I try to seek a hole to hide my head in, and to steal away from this passage, not with fear, but with skill. It is not my thought to make proof or display of my firmness in this act of dying. Why should I? At that time will cease all my claim and concern for renown. I content myself with a death withdrawn into itself, peaceful and solitary, belonging to me alone, suited to my retired and secluded life; in contrast to the irrational Roman belief, which esteemed unfortunate him who died in silence and who had not his nearest friends to close his eyes.[3] I have enough to do to console myself, without consoling others; thoughts enough in my head, without having surrounding conditions bring me new ones; and enough substance to maintain me without borrowing. This part of our existence is not in the register of social relations;[4] it is the act of a single individual. Let us live and laugh among our friends; let us go among strangers to die and be grim. By paying, you can find some one to turn your pillow and to rub your feet, who urges you only as much as you desire, shewing you an indifferent countenance, allowing you to manage yourself and complain as you list.

[1] *Pour le gratter justement ou il luy cuit, ou qu'on ne le gratte point du tout.*

[2] *Sage femme*, the French term for midwife.

[3] See Crinitus, *De Honesta Disciplina*, XVIII, 12.

[4] *Cette partie n'est pas du rolle de la societé.*

I rid myself continually, by reasoning, of that childish and unkind inclination which makes us desire to excite for our ills the compassion and grief of our friends. We make our discomforts weigh beyond their true measure, to draw tears from them; and that constancy in supporting his own ill-fortune which we praise in any one, we blame and reproach in those about us when the ill-fortune is ours. We are not satisfied with their perceiving our ills — they must be grieved by them as well. We must increase joy but diminish sadness as much as we can. (*c*) He who complains unreasonably is not pitied when there is reason for it; it is a sure way to avoid ever being pitied, to be forever complaining, making yourself out as pitiable so often that you are pitiable to nobody; he who plays that he is dead when living is likely to be regarded as alive when dying. I have seen some persons take it in dudgeon [1] that it was thought that their colour was good and their pulse regular, restrain their smiles because it would betray their recovery, and hate health because it was not to be deplored; what is more, these were not women.

(*b*) I picture my sicknesses, for the most part, just as they are, and avoid words of evil presage and studied [2] exclamations. If not joyfulness, at least a serene bearing is suitable in those attending on a wise sick man. Because he sees himself in a different condition, he does not pick a quarrel with health; it pleases him to contemplate it in others, strong and sound, and to enjoy at least its companionship. Because he feels himself sinking, he does not reject all thoughts of life or shun common talk. I would study sickness when I am well; when it comes, it makes a sufficiently real impression without the help of my imagination. We prepare beforehand for the journeys we undertake, and are fully determined thereon; the hour at which we must take horse we give to the bystanders and lengthen it for their sake.

I feel this unhoped for benefit from the publication of my habits of mind,[3] that it serves me somewhat as a pattern: I have at times some thought of not being false to the nar-

[1] *Prendre la chevre.*

[2] *Composées* here would seem to have somewhat the sense of *solemn.*

[3] *Mes mœurs.*

ration of my life.[1] This public declaration compels me to keep to my road and not belie the picture of my conditions, which, for the most part, are less misshapen and contradictory than the malignity and unhealthiness of present-day judgements imply. The uniformity and simplicity of my character gives me an outer appearance of easy interpretation; but because its fashion is a little novel and unusual, it gives a fine opportunity for speaking ill of it. Yet is it true that to him who desires in good faith to abuse me, it seems to me that I offer sufficient surface wherein to set his teeth, in my acknowledged and well-known imperfections, and the wherewithal to have enough of it without idle skirmishing.[2] If by my anticipation of the accusation and the disclosure it seems to him that I frustrate his bite, it is reasonable for him to use his rights of amplification and extension (attack has its rights beyond justice), and that he should enlarge into trees vices of which I show him the roots in myself. Let him make use in this not solely of those vices that possess me, but of those also that only threaten me — harmful both in quality and in number; let him therewith cudgel me.

(*c*) I would readily adopt the example of the philosopher Bion. Antigonus tried to tease him on the subject of his origin; the philosopher cut him short. "I am," he said, "the son of a slave, a butcher, who was branded, and of a strumpet whom my father married because of the lowliness of his station. Both were punished for some misdeed. An orator bought me when a child, finding me handsome and well-behaved; and at his death left me all his property, which having brought hither to this city of Athens, I have devoted myself to philosophy. Let not historians trouble themselves to seek tales about me: I will tell them all there is to tell." [3] A generous and free confession enfeebles blame and disarms offence.

(*b*) However that may be, all things considered, it seems to me that I am as often unreasonably praised as disesteemed; as it also seems to me that from my childhood I have been given a station, both in rank and in honour,

[1] *Ma peinture.* [2] *Sans s'escarmoucher au vent.*
[3] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Bion.*

rather above than below what appertains to me. (*c*) I should find myself more comfortable in a country where these degrees were either regulated or disregarded; with the male sex, when the altercation as to precedence in walking or sitting goes beyond three rejoinders, it is discourtesy. I never shrink from wrongly giving or taking place, to avoid so troublesome a contestation; and never did any man grudge my precedence that I did not abandon it to him.

(*b*) Beyond this benefit that I derive from writing of myself, I have hoped for this further one, that, if it happened that my humours should, before my departure, please and harmonise with those of some worthy man, he would seek to bring us together. I have given him much ground, since all that he might have acquired in several years of long acquaintance and intimacy he has seen in three days in this record, and more surely and accurately. (*c*) An amusing thought! Many things which I would not say in private I say in public, and send my most loyal friends to a book-shop to learn my most secret studies or thoughts;

Excutienda damus præcordia.[1]

Had I known by such sure tokens of any one who would have suited me, I surely would have gone very far to find him; (*b*) for the charm of congenial and pleasant companionship can not be bought too dear, in my opinion. Ah! what is a friend? How true is that ancient saying that a friend is more necessary and more delightful than the elements of water and fire![2]

To return to what I was saying, there is, then, no great ill in dying far from home and by oneself. (*c*) But we regard it as a duty to retire for natural actions which are less uncomely than this and less grim. (*b*) But again, they who have come to the point of feebly dragging on a long period of life ought not, perchance, to desire to burden with their wretchedness a large family. (*c*) Therefore the Indians of a certain province thought it right to kill him who had fallen into such necessitous case; in another of their pro-

[1] We give our hearts to be examined. — Persius, V, 22.

[2] See Plutarch, *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend;* Cicero, *De Amicitia*, VI.

vinces they forsook him, to save himself alone as he could.[1] (*b*) To whom do they not at last become wearisome and insupportable? Ordinary kindnesses [2] do not extend so far as that. You teach cruelty perforce to your best friends, hardening wife and children, by long accustomedness, no more to fear and sympathise with your ills. The moans of my colic no longer are considered by any one. And if we derived some pleasure from intercourse with them,[3] — which does not always happen, because of the disparity of conditions readily creating contempt or envy toward any one whatsoever,— is it not too much to misuse thus a great number of their years? [4] The more I saw them bravely constraining themselves out of kindness for me, the more sorry I should be for the trouble they take. We are at liberty to lean on others, not to weigh upon them so heavily and prop ourselves by their ruin; like him who caused little children's throats to be cut in order to make use of their blood for the cure of a disease he had; [5] or that other for whom they provided young delicate bodies to warm his old limbs at night,[6] and to mingle with his rank and heavy breath the sweetness of theirs. I would warmly advise Venice for the place of retirement of such a weak condition of life.[7]

(*c*) Decrepitude is a condition for solitude. I am sociable even to excess; yet it seems reasonable to me that henceforth I withdraw my unfitness from the sight of the world and cower over it alone; that I draw myself together and retreat into my shell like the tortoises; that I learn to see men without clinging to them. I should do them a wrong in so steeply sloping a path; it is time to turn my back on my companions.

(*b*) "But in these journeys you may be disastrously caught in some beggarly hole where you will lack every thing." The greater number of essential things I carry with me; and then, besides, we are not able to evade For-

[1] See Herodotus, III, 99, 100.
[2] *Les offices communes.*
[3] That is, with those nearest us.
[4] *Tout un aage.*
[5] It has been suggested that he refers here to Louis XI.
[6] Probably an allusion to King David. See *I Kings*, I, 2, 3.
[7] This sentence of 1588 was omitted in 1595.

tune if she undertakes to set upon us. When I am sick I need nothing out of the ordinary; what Nature can not effect in me, I do not choose that a bolus should do. At the outset of my fevers and sicknesses, when they attack me, being still myself and not far from health, I make my peace with God by the last Christian offices; and I find myself thereby more free and unburdened, and it seems to me that I have thus brought my malady to more equal terms. Of a notary and of advice I have less need than of physicians. What I shall not have settled about my affairs when I am in sound health, let it not be at all expected that I shall do when I am sick. What I desire to do in preparation for death is always done; I should not dare delay it a single day. And if there is nothing done, that means either that uncertainty will have retarded my choice, — for sometimes not to choose is really to choose, — or that I shall have indeed wished to do nothing.

I write my book for few men and for few years; if it had been a thing to last, it would have been needful to commit it to a more fixed language. Judging by the constant variation that our own language has undergone to this moment, who can hope that its present form will be in use fifty years hence? (*c*) It slips from our hands every day, and in my lifetime it has altered by half. We say that it is not perfect; every age says as much of its own. I have no mind to hold it as such so long as it remains unstable [1] and misshapes itself as it does; it is for excellent and profitable writings to rivet it to them, and its favour with the world will be according to the fortune of our State. (*b*) Therefore I do not hesitate to insert here many personal points which will have meaning only for men who are living to-day, and which touch the private knowledge of some who will see further into them than can the general intelligence. I do not choose, when my end comes, — as I often see the memory of the dead discussed, — that people shall argue: "He thus thought and lived; he desired this; if he had spoken at the end, he would have said this, he would have bestowed that; I knew him better than any one else." Now, so far as decorum permits me, I make my inclinations and

[1] *Tant qu'il fuira.*

affections apparent here; but I do it more freely and readily by word of mouth to whoever desires to be informed about them. However, in these records, if they are considered, it will be found that I have said or indicated every thing; what I can not express, I point at.

> Verum animo satis hæc vestigia parva sagaci
> Sunt, per quæ possis cognoscere cætera tute.[1]

I leave nothing to be desired or to be guessed about myself. If I am to be talked about, I desire that it shall be truthfully and justly; I would willingly return from the other world to contradict him who should make me out other than I was, though it were to do me honour. The living even, I feel, are always spoken of as other than they are. And if I had not upheld with might and main a friend whom I had lost, he would have been distorted into a thousand differing aspects.[2] I well know that I shall leave behind me no surety at all approaching in affection and in knowledge of me what mine was of him; nor any one to whom I should be willing to entrust my portraiture; he alone possessed my true likeness, and he carried it away with him. This is the reason I depict myself so carefully.[3]

To finish talking of my weaknesses, I acknowledge that in travelling I scarcely reach any lodging that the thought does not pass through my mind, whether, when sick and dying, I shall be comfortable there. I wish to be lodged in a place which can be very private, noiseless, not gloomy or smoky or close. I seek to soothe Death by these trivial surroundings, or, to say better, to relieve myself from all other encumbrances, so that I may have only to count on her, who will easily weigh enough upon me without other burden. I wish that she should have her share in the ease and fitness of my life; this matter of dying is a large and important piece of it, and I hope that, when it comes, it will not belie the past.

[1] But these slight traces are enough for a keen mind; through them you will be able to learn the rest. — Lucretius, I, 402.

[2] The allusion is to the publication of La Boëtie's *Le Contr'un*. Cf. Book I, chap. 28 (Vol. I, pp. 259, 260).

[3] The last six lines were omitted in 1595 — by Mlle de Gournay?

Death has some forms more gentle than others, and takes on diverse qualities according to each one's mind. Of natural deaths those that come from weakness and stupour seem to me easy and kind; of violent deaths I dislike more to imagine a fall from a precipice than a ruin falling upon me, and a sword-thrust more than a musket-shot; and I should rather have drunk the draught of Socrates than have stabbed myself like Plato. And though it may be all the same thing, yet my imagination feels a difference, as betwixt death and life, betwixt throwing myself into a red-hot furnace and into the channel of a shallow river; (*c*) so foolishly do our fears regard more the means than the effect. (*b*) It is only an instant; but it has such weight that I would readily give many days of my life to pass it after my fashion. Since every man's mind finds something of more or of less bitterness in death, since every one has some choice amongst the ways of dying, let us try a little more deeply if we can find some form free from all unpleasantness. Could it not even be made voluptuous, as the Commorans [1] of Antony and Cleopatra made it? I leave aside the austere and exemplary efforts made by philosophy and religion. But amongst men of little note there are found some, as a Petronius and a Tigellinus at Rome,[2] bound to inflict death on themselves, who, as it were, have lulled it to sleep by the delicacy of their preparations; they made it flow and glide amidst the worthlessness of their wonted pastimes, amongst wenches and boon companions; no talk of consolation, no mention of a testament, no ambitious affectation of firmness, no discourse about their future condition; amidst games, feasts, jests, common and familiar conversations, and music, and amorous verses. Could we not imitate this resoluteness with a wiser demeanour? Since there are deaths suitable for fools, and others suitable for wise men, let us find some that may be suitable for those who are neither the one nor the other. (*c*) My imagination suggests to me some of gracious aspect and, since we must

[1] The bands of those who wished to die together. See Plutarch, *Life of Antony*.

[2] See Tacitus, *Annals*, XVI, 19, and *History*, I, 72. They were condemned by the Emperor Nero to put themselves to death.

die, desirable. The Roman tyrants thought that it was giving life to the criminal when they gave him a choice about his death. But was not Theophrastus, a philosopher so refined, so modest, and so wise, compelled by force of reason to dare to repeat this verse, latinised by Cicero, —

Vitam regit fortuna, non sapientia? [1]

Fortune assists in making easy the marketing of my life,[2] having placed it in such case that henceforth it is neither a need nor a burden to those nearest me. This is a condition which I would have accepted at all periods of my life; but at this time of preparing for my departure [3] and of packing up my baggage, I more especially take pleasure in that my dying is for them neither a kindness nor an unkindness. By an artistic counterpoise she has arranged that those who can lay claim to some material profit from my death will sustain by it also, conjointly, a material loss. Our death often weighs upon us because it weighs upon others, and concerns us for them almost as much as for ourselves, and sometimes even more.

(*b*) In the comfortable quarters that I seek I do not include sumptuousness and spaciousness, — rather, I detest them, — but a certain simple nicety, which is found more frequently in places where there is less elaborateness and which Nature honours with some charm all her own: *non ampliter sed munditer convivium; plus salis quam sumptus.*[4] And, moreover, it is for those whose business carries them in midwinter through the Grisons to be surprised on the road in such an extremity. I, who oftenest travel for my pleasure, do not so poorly guide myself; if the road be unattractive on the right hand, I take the left-hand road; if I find myself unfit to ride, I stay where I am. And so doing, I

[1] Life is ruled by fortune, not by wisdom. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 9.

[2] *A la facilitē du marchē de ma vie.*

[3] *De trousser mes bribes.*

[4] A feast not abundant, but neatly served; where there is more good-fellowship than luxury. — The first phrase is quoted by Nonius, XI, 19, but was probably taken by Montaigne from Justus Lipsius, *Saturnalium sermonum libri*, I, 6; the last is from C. Nepos, *Atticus*, XIII.

see, in truth, no place that is not as agreeable and convenient as my house. It is true, I find superfluity always superfluous, and even in daintiness and abundance I note some encumbrance. If I have left behind me something to be seen, I return thither; it is always on my way; I mark no fixed line, either straight or circuitous. If I find not where I go what I had been told that I should find, — as it often happens that the judgements of others do not agree with mine and I have found them for the most part to be mistaken, — I do not complain of my trouble; I have learned that what had been told me was not so.

I have a bodily constitution as free, and a palate as unfastidious, as any man in the world; the diversity of modes of living between one nation and another affects me only with pleasure in the variety. Every custom has its reason. Let the dishes be of pewter, of wood, or of clay, boiled meat or roasted, butter, or oil of nuts or olives, hot or cold, it is all one to me, and so much so that, as I grow old, I find fault with this liberal faculty, and I shall need to have the indiscretion of my appetite stayed, and sometimes my stomach eased, by daintiness and selection. (*c*) When I have been elsewhere than in France, and have been asked out of courtesy if I wished to be served in the French fashion, I have laughed at the idea and have always frequented the tables most full of foreigners. (*b*) I am ashamed to see my countrymen besotted by the foolish humour of being exasperated by fashions contrary to their own; they seem to themselves to be out of their element when they are out of their village; wherever they go, they cling to their customs and abhor those that are strange to them. If they find a compatriot in Hungary, they make much of this luck; see them join together and unite in condemning all the barbarous manners that they behold. Why not barbarous, since they are not French? Yet it is only the cleverest who have taken sufficient note of them to speak ill of them. The greater number go from home only for the coming back; they travel secretly and withdrawn,[1] protecting themselves with silent and uncommunicative prudence from the contagion of unknown ways.

[1] *Couverts et resserrez.*

What I say of them brings to my mind what I have occasionally observed as a similar thing in some of our young courtiers: they associate only with men of their own sort, looking upon us as of another world, with disdain or pity. Deprive them of talk about the mysteries of the court — they are out of their element, and as strange and stupid to us as we are to them. It is very well said that a well-bred man is a man of many ingredients. I, on the contrary, wander in unfamiliar countries, thoroughly sated with our ways; not to seek Gascons in Sicily — I have left enough of them at home. I seek Greeks rather, and Persians; I make their acquaintance and observe them; it is to that that I give myself, and there I employ myself. And what is more, it seems to me that I have fallen in with few customs that are not as good as ours; herein I risk little, for I have hardly lost sight of my own weather-vanes.

Besides, the greater part of the chance company you meet on your way causes more annoyance than pleasure. I do not consort with them; less nowadays, when old age severs me from others and somewhat separates me from common social forms. You are discomfitted by others, or others by you; either mischance is burdensome, but the latter seems to me the more painful. It is a rare fortune, but of inestimable solace, to have a worthy man, of sure intelligence and of character concordant with your own, who is glad to accompany you, and who takes pleasure in aiding you.[1] I have sadly lacked such companions in all my travels. But it is essential that they be chosen and acquired before leaving home. No pleasure has any savour for me without imparting it; not even a lively thought comes into my mind that I am not vexed at expressing it when alone and at having no one to offer it to. (*c*) *Si cum hac exceptione detur sapientia, ut illam inclusam teneam nec enuntiem, rejiciam.*[2] This other carried it a step further: *Si contigerit ea vita sapienti ut, omnium rerum affluentibus copiis, quamvis omnia, quæ cognitione digna sunt, summo otio secum ipse consideret et contempletur, tamen si solitudo tanta*

[1] The last clause was omitted in 1595.

[2] If wisdom were granted me on this condition, that I keep it shut up and do not impart it, I would refuse it. — Seneca, *Epistle* 6.

sit ut hominem videre non possit, excedat e vita.[1] (*b*) The opinion of Archytas is acceptable to me, that this would be unpleasant in heaven itself, and to wander among those great and divine celestial bodies without the presence of a companion.[2] But yet it is better to be alone than in tiresome and stupid company. Aristippus liked to live as a stranger everywhere.[3]

> Me si fata meis paterentur ducere vitam
> Auspiciis,[4]

I would choose to pass it in the saddle, —

> Visere gestiens,
> Qua parte debacchentur ignes,
> Qua nebulæ pluviique rores.[5]

[6] "Have you not easier pastimes? What do you lack? Is not your house in a pleasant and healthy air, sufficiently furnished and more than sufficiently large? (*c*) The royal majesty has been there more than once in state.[7] (*b*) Has not your family, as regards rank, more beneath it than above it in eminence? Is there any fixed thought, unusual, not to be digested, which causes you suffering, —

> Quæ te nunc coquat et vexet sub pectore fixa? [8]

[1] If it were to happen to a wise man that amidst great abundance of all things he had leisure to contemplate and reflect on all that is worthy to be known, but if his solitude were so great that he could see no other person, he would quit this life. — Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 43.

[2] See Idem, *De Amicitia*, XXIII.

[3] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, II, 1.

[4] If the fates allowed me to lead my life in my own way. — Virgil, *Æneid*, IV, 340.

[5] Longing to go to see in what quarter the fiery heat revels furiously, in what quarter are the clouds and the showers of rain. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 3.54.

[6] The quotation marks here indicate an imaginary speech.

[7] King Henri IV supped and slept at Montaigne, December 19, 1584. On October 23, 1587, he was there again and remained some days.

[8] Which now, fixed in your breast, torments and distresses you. — Ennius, in Cicero, *De Senectute*, I. Taken by Montaigne from J. Lipsius, *De Constantia*, I, 8; but he has changed the text, which is: *Quæ nunc te coquit et versat sub pectore fixa.*

Where do you imagine that you can exist free from hindrance and disturbance? *Nunquam simpliciter fortuna indulget.*[1] Observe that it is only you yourself who hinders you; and you will follow yourself everywhere, and you will repine everywhere; for there is no satisfaction here below, save for brutish or divine souls. He who finds not contentment on so just an occasion, where does he think to find it? For how many thousands of men is not such a condition as yours the limit of their desires? Reform only yourself, for there you have full power, whereas you have no title to aught save patience toward fortune. (*c*) *Nulla placida quies est, nisi quam ratio composuit.*"[2]

(*b*) I see the reasonableness of this advice, and see it very clearly; but it would have been shorter and more to the point to say to me in one word, "Be wise." Such a determination is beyond wisdom; it is its work and its creation. It is like the physician who urges a poor feeble sick man to be cheerful; he would counsel him a little less foolishly if he said, "Be well." As for me, I am only a man of the ordinary sort. There is a salutary, definite precept, and of easy understanding: "Be content with what you have"; that is common sense; its execution, however, is no more possible for the wisest men than for me. It is a familiar saying, but it is terribly far-reaching; for what does it not include? All things are subject to discrimination and qualification. I am well aware that, looked at from the outside,[3] this enjoyment of travel gives evidence of restlessness and unsteadiness, and in sooth these are our controlling and predominant qualities. Yes, I confess that I can see nothing, even in imagination and in desire, which I could hold fast to; variety alone satisfies me, and the enjoyment of diversity; at least, if any thing satisfies me. In travelling I am at ease,[4] in that I can stop without loss and that I can alter my course as I will.[5]

[1] Fortune never bestows her favours without reserve. — Quintus Curtius, IV, 14.

[2] There is no tranquil peace save that which reason has made. — Seneca, *Epistle* 56.

[3] *A le prendre à la lettre.*

[4] *Cela mesme me nourrit.*

[5] *Et que j'ay ou m'en divertir commodéement.*

I enjoy private life, because it is by my choice that I enjoy it, not from unfitness for public life, which is perchance not less suited to my temperament. I serve my prince in it the more cheerfully because I do it by the free preference of my judgement and my reason, (*c*) without special obligation, (*b*) and because I am neither hindered nor compelled about this by being unwelcome to any other party, and disliked; and so in other matters. I hate the morsels that necessity carves out for me; any thing advantageous upon which alone I should have to depend would strangle me.

Alter remus aquas, alter mihi radat arenas.[1]

A single bowstring never suffices me comfortably. "There is vanity," you say, "in this amusement." But where is there none? these fine precepts are vanity, and all wisdom is vanity. (*c*) *Dominus novit cogitationes sapientium, quoniam vanæ sunt.*[2] (*b*) Such refined subtleties are suited only for sermons; they are arguments which aim at sending us ready-prepared into the other world. Life is a material and corporeal movement; an action imperfect in its very essence, and irregular; I make it my business to wait on it in accordance with its nature.

Quisque suos patimur manes.[3]

(*c*) *Sic est faciendum ut contra naturam universam nihil contendamus; ea tamen conservata propriam sequamur.*[4] (*b*) To what end are these lofty points of philosophy, to which no human being can adjust himself, and these rules, which exceed our usage and our strength?

I often see that conceptions of life are proposed to us, which neither he who proposes them nor his auditors have any hope of following; or, what is more, any desire to do so. From the same paper on which he has just written the de-

[1] Let one of my oars graze the water, the other the shore. — Propertius, III, 3.23. The same verse is quoted in Book II, chap. 17 (Vol. III, p. 55).

[2] The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. — *Psalm* XCIV, 55.

[3] Each of us suffers his own spirit's doom. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VI, 743.

[4] We must so act as not at all to contend against universal nature; but that being safeguarded, let us follow our own. — Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 31.

cree of condemnation of an adulterer, the judge steals a page on which to write a love letter to the wife of his fellow judge. (*c*) The woman whom you have just unlawfully embraced will soon after, in your very presence, on hearing of a similar fault in her friend, cry out more loudly than Portia herself[1] would do; (*b*) and men there are who condemn others to death for crimes which in themselves they do not regard as faults. In my youth I saw a man of note[2] offer to the people with one hand verses excelling in beauty and in licentiousness, and with the other hand, at the same moment, the most contentious argument dealing with divine matters on which the world has broken fast for a long time. Thus go men; we leave the laws and the precepts to follow their course; we take another course, not from irregularity of morals only, but often from judgement and diverse opinion. Listen to a philosophical discourse: its originality, eloquence, pertinence immediately strike your mind and move you; there is nothing which tickles or prickles your conscience; it is not to it that the discourse speaks. Is not this true? Yet Aristo said that neither a hot bath nor a lecture is of any worth if it does not purify and cleanse.[3] We can linger over the bark, but we do so after we have removed the pith; as, after we have drunk good wine from a beautiful cup, we examine its carvings and workmanship.[4] In all the schools of ancient philosophy this will be found, that the same teacher publishes rules of temperance and at the same time publishes writings of love and wantonness. (*c*) And Xenophon, in the bosom of Clinias, wrote against the Aristippic virtue.[5] (*b*) It is not that there is a miraculous conversion that moves them in waves, but that Solon presents himself, now in his own person, now in the guise of a legislator; now he speaks for the multitude, now for himself; and adopts for himself

[1] The daughter of Cato of Utica, who killed herself when she learned of the death of Brutus, her husband, after the battle of Philippi. See Plutarch, *Life of Brutus*.

[2] Perhaps Antoine Muret, or Théodore de Bèze.

[3] See Plutarch, *Of Hearing*.

[4] See *Ibid.*

[5] Diogenes Laertius in his *Life of Xenophon* speaks of Xenophon's love for Clinias.

free and natural laws, feeling assured of firm and perfect health.

Curentur dubii medicis majoribus ægri.[1]

(*c*) Antisthenes allows the wise man to love, and to do in his own way what he finds to be opportune, without regard to the laws, forasmuch as he has better judgement than they and more knowledge of virtue.[2] Diogenes, his disciple, said that to unquietness of mind should be opposed reason; to fortune, confidence, and to the laws, nature.[3] (*b*) For delicate stomachs, compulsory and artificial rules are necessary; (*c*) good stomachs use simply the prescriptions of their natural appetite. (*b*) Thus our physicians eat melons and drink new wine whilst they keep their patient limited to syrup and panada. "I know nothing of their books," said the courtesan Laïs, "nor of their wisdom or their philosophy, but those people knock at my door as often as any others."[4] Inasmuch as our freedom is always carrying us beyond what is lawful and permissible for us, the precepts and laws of our life have often been narrowed beyond general reason.

Nemo satis credit tantum delinquere quantum
Permittas.[5]

It could be desired that there were more proportion between the command and the obedience, and the mark seems unreasonable which can not be hit. There does not exist a man of such worth that, were he to lay open to the scrutiny of the laws all his actions and thoughts, he would not deserve hanging ten times in his life — in truth, such a man as it would be very harmful and very unjust to punish and to cast away.

Olle, quid ad te
De cute quid faciat ille, vel illa sua?[6]

[1] Let sick men who are in danger be treated by the greatest physicians. — Juvenal, XIII, 124.

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Antisthenes*.

[3] See Idem, *Life of Diogenes the Cynic*.

[4] See Antoine de Guevara, *Golden Letters*.

[5] No one thinks that such measure of transgression as you allow him is enough. — Juvenal, XIV, 233.

[6] What is it to you, Ollus, what this man or this woman does with his skin? — Martial, VII, 9.1.

And a man might be such as never to offend the laws, who would not for that deserve the praise of being a virtuous man, (*c*) and whom philosophy would very justly order to be whipped, (*b*) so confused and irregular is the relation of these conditions. We take no heed to being good men in the opinion of God; we could not be so in our own. Human wisdom never attained to the duties which she had prescribed for herself; and if she had attained to them, she would have prescribed for herself other duties higher still, which she would always aspire to and aim at, so great an enemy to consistency is our existence.

(*c*) Man commands himself to be necessarily in fault. It is not very crafty to measure one's bounden duty by the consideration of another existence than one's own. To whom does he prescribe what he expects no one to do? Is it wrong for him not to do what it is impossible for him to do? The laws which condemn us to be powerless condemn us for being powerless.[1]

(*b*) At the worst, this misshapen liberty to offer oneself on two sides, our actions in one fashion, our reasoning in another, may be permissible for those who discourse of things; but it can not be permissible for those who discourse of themselves, as I do. My pen must accompany my feet. Life in common must have relation to other lives. Cato's virtue was vigorous beyond the understanding of his time; and in a man who took part in ruling other men, dedicated to the service of all, it might be said to have had in it a sort of justice which, if not unjust, was at least idle and unseasonable. (*c*) Even my own character, which differs scarcely an inch from those of common fashion,[2] renders me nevertheless somewhat untractable to the age I live in, and austere. I know not whether I find myself unreasonably without relish for the world I am familiar with, but I well know that it would be unreasonable if, since this is the case, I bemoaned myself because it had no relish for me. (*b*) The virtue that appertains to worldly affairs is a virtue with

[1] *Les loix qui nous condamnent à ne pouvoir pas nous condamnent de ce que nous ne pouvons.*

[2] *Mes mœurs mesme, qui ne disconviennent de celles qui courent à peine de la largeur d'un poulce.*

many twists and turnings and elbowings, that it may be adapted and joined to human weakness; complicated and artful, not upright, pure, firm, or altogether innocent. Our annals even to this day reproach some one of our kings for having too simply followed the godly advice of his confessor. Affairs of state have bolder precepts:

Exeat aula
Qui vult esse pius.[1]

I formerly attempted to employ in the service of public negotiations ideas and rules of life as blunt, inexperienced, unpolished, and unpolluted as when they were born in me or imprinted on my mind by my education, and of which, if not fitly, at least with safety, I make use for myself; a bookish and unskilful virtue. I have found these ideas to be in such matters unseasonable and dangerous. He who enters into the crowd must wind about, keep his elbows close, go back or go forward — must, in truth, leave the straight path because of what he encounters; he must live not so much according to his own ideas as according to those of others; not according to what he himself proposes, but according to what is proposed to him — according to the times, the men, and the affairs of the moment. (*c*) Plato says that he who escapes with clean skirts from the handling of the world escapes by a miracle;[2] and he says also that, when he decrees that his philosopher shall be the head of a government, he does not mean to speak of a corrupt government like that of Athens;[3] and even much less would it be of one like ours, where wisdom itself would be at a loss. And a healthy plant transplanted into a soil very foreign to its nature much more readily adapts itself to the soil than it changes the character of the soil. (*b*) I feel that, if I had to train myself thoroughly for such employments, I should need much change and correction. Even if I could expect this in myself (and why could I not with time and pains?), I would not do it. From the little that I have essayed of this vocation I have in due measure felt distaste for it; I

[1] Let him leave the court who would be just. — Lucan, VIII, 493.
[2] See the *Republic*, book VI.
[3] See *Ibid.*

sometimes perceive smouldering in my soul some temptings toward ambition, but I stiffen myself and persist obstinately in an opposite course.

At tu, Catulle, obstinatus obdura.[1]

I am seldom summoned thither, and I invite myself there as little. (*c*) Freedom and laziness, which are my predominant qualities, are diametrically contrary to that profession.

(*b*) We have not learned to distinguish the faculties of men: they have divisions and limits which are difficult to discern and scarcely perceptible. To infer from ability in private life ability for public employ is a weak inference: a man may guide himself well who does not guide others well, (*c*) and he may produce essays who could not produce results; (*b*) a man may direct a siege well who would direct a battle ill, and may discourse well in private who would harangue ill a multitude or a prince. It is in truth, perhaps, rather than otherwise, a proof that he who is capable of the one is not at all capable of the other. (*c*) I find that great minds are not better fitted for small matters than small minds are for great matters. Is it believable that Socrates could give the Athenians food for laughter at his expense from never having been able to reckon up the votes of his tribe and make report thereof to the Council?[2] Truly the veneration in which I hold the perfections of that great mind deserves that his fortune should offer such a magnificent example for the excuse of my principal imperfections. (*b*) Our ability is cut out in small parcels; mine has no breadth, and in number it is paltry. Saturninus said to those who had conferred upon him supreme command: "My friends, you have lost a good captain by making of him a bad general."[3]

He who boasts, in such ill-conditioned times as these, of employing in the world's service simple and sincere virtue either does not know what that is, opinions becoming corrupt with morals (in truth, hear men's description of it, hear how most men glory in their conduct and form their

[1] But thou, Catullus, be firm and obdurate. — Catullus, VIII, 19.
[2] See Plato, *Gorgias*.
[3] See Trebellius Pollio, *Triginta Tyranni*.

rules: instead of describing virtue, they describe perfectly pure injustice and vice, and offer it thus falsified for the education of princes), or, if he does know what it is, he boasts without warrant, and, whatever he may say, he does a thousand things for which his conscience blames him. I would readily believe Seneca as to his experience in similar conditions, provided he were willing to speak of it to me frankly. The most honourable indication of sincerity in such necessity is freely to acknowledge one's own fault and that of others; to resist and retard with all one's might the tendency toward evil; to follow this propension only against one's will; to have better hope and better desire.

In these dismemberments of France and the disagreements we have fallen into, I perceive that every one labours to defend his own cause; but even the best do so with dissimulation and falsehood. He who should write plainly of these matters would write of them at haphazard and erroneously. The most upright party is still a limb of a rotten and decayed body; but of such a body the least diseased limb is called sound, and rightfully, forasmuch as our qualities have no rank but in comparison. Innocence in matters of government [1] is measured according to places and periods. I should like well to find in Xenophon [2] praise of Agesilaus for such an incident as this: that, being entreated by a neighbouring prince, with whom he had formerly been at war, to allow him to pass through his territory, he assented, giving him passage through the Peloponnesus; and not only did not imprison or poison him when at his mercy, but welcomed him courteously (*c*) in accordance with the obligation of his promise, (*b*) doing him no injury. To the disposition of the minds of those days, this would mean nothing; elsewhere and in other times the generosity and magnanimity of such an act will be taken into account;

[1] *L'innocence civile. Innocence* = freedom from wrong-doing.

[2] *J'aymerois bien à voir en Xenophon.* This phrase has the same ironic sense as in English: "I should like to see him do it," and means: "I should be surprised to find in Xenophon." Montaigne had in mind the passage of Charles V through France in 1540, and he contrasts the tone of Xenophon's day with that of his own, and with that of other places and periods. But see Xenophon, *Agesilaus*, III and IV.

knavish and worthless men of our day [1] would jeer at it, so little does Spartan innocence resemble the French.

We are not lacking in virtuous men, but they are of our fashion. He whose character is established by a standard superior to his time must either bend and blunt his rules or — which I advise him rather — withdraw apart and mingle not at all with us. What could he gain thereby?

> Egregium sanctumque virum si cerno, bimembri
> Hoc monstrum puero, et miranti jam sub aratro
> Piscibus inventis, et fœtæ comparo mulæ.[2]

We may sigh for better days, but not fly from the present; we may desire other magistrates, but we must, none the less, obey those we have; and perchance there is more to be commended in obeying the bad than the good. So long as the semblance of the accepted and long-held laws of this realm shall shine in any corner of it, there shall I be found rooted; if by misfortune the laws arrive at contradicting and hindering one another and create two parties of doubtful and difficult choice, I shall quickly choose to escape and steal away from that confusion; meanwhile, nature may perhaps lend me a hand, or the fortunes of war. Between Cæsar and Pompeius I should have declared myself openly; but as between those three thieves who came later,[3] it would have been necessary either to hide or to go with the current, which I think permissible when reason no longer shews the way.

> Quo diversus abis? [4]

These considerations [5] are a little outside of my subject. I stray from my path, but rather consciously than carelessly; my ideas follow one another, but sometimes at a distance, and regard one another, but with a sidelong

[1] *Ces babouyns capettes.*

[2] If I see an honourable and virtuous man, I think him as great a prodigy as a boy that is half beast, or as fish found, to our amazement, under the ploughshare, or as a mule with foal. — Juvenal, XIII, 64.

[3] Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus.

[4] Whither go you, away from the course? — Virgil, *Æneid*, V, 166.

[5] *Cette farcissure* — about the inconsistency between precepts and practice.

glance. (*c*) I have noticed a certain dialogue of Plato,[1] composed of two halves of fantastic diversity — the beginning, of love, all the rest, of rhetoric. They [2] do not shrink from these changes, and have a wonderful grace in letting themselves be thus carried along by the wind, or in seeming to be so. (*b*) The titles of my chapters do not always describe their content; often they only indicate it by some badge as these others did: *Andria* and *Eunuchus;*[3] or these: *Sylla, Cicero, Torquatus.*[4]

I like the skipping and gambolling motions of poetry; (*c*) it is, as Plato says, a light, flitting art, possessed by a spirit.[5] There are pieces in Plutarch in which he forgets his theme, in which the drift of his argument is found only incidentally, quite stifled under foreign matter; observe his procedure in the *Dæmon of Socrates*. Lord! what beauty there is in those spirited irregularities and that variety; and greatest when the charm seems most careless and fortuitous! It is the inattentive reader who loses sight of my subject, not I; there will always be found in a corner some word which does not fail to be sufficient, although it may be concise. I wander here and there [6] inconsiderately and inadvisedly; my style and my mind go vagabonding alike. (*b*) A little folly is needful for one who does not de-

[1] The *Phædrus*.

[2] The ancient writers.

[3] Two plays of Terence.

[4] Sylla's name is said to have been given him because of his colour. Says Amyot, in a note to his translation of Plutarch's *Life of Sylla:* "*Syl* in Latin signifies ochre, which turns red when it is put into the fire."

In his *Life of Cicero*, Plutarch says: "I think that the first who bore the name of Cicero was some personage of note, and that, from love of him, his descendants did not drop that name but were very glad to retain it; although many made fun of it, because *cicer* means a dried pea, and the great Cicero had a wart or something of the sort on the end of his nose, which resembled a dried pea, and they said that he was called Cicero because of that."

Torquatus (surname of Manlius) comes from the Latin *torquis*, a necklace. The name was given to him because of a necklace that he took from a Gaul in single combat. See Livy, VII, 10; Aulus Gellius, IX, 13.

[5] *Un art leger, volage, demoniacle.* See Plato, *Ion.*

[6] *Je vais au change.*

sire to be the more foolish — (*c*) so say the precepts of our masters, and even more their examples.

(*b*) A thousand poets drag along feebly and prosaically; but the best ancient prose — (*c*) and I strew it here indifferently with verse — (*b*) glows in every part with the vigour and boldness of poetry, and offers some image of its impetuosity; there must be granted to it superiority and preëminence in social intercourse.[1] (*c*) The poet, says Plato, seated on the tripod of the Muses, pours forth impetuously all that comes to his lips, like the spout of a fountain, without reflecting upon it and weighing it; and there escape from him things of divers colours, of contradictory substance, and of irregular flow.[2] Plato himself is poetic throughout, and the learned tell us that the old theology and the earliest philosophy are all poetry; it is the original language of the gods.

(*b*) I think that the subject appears distinctly of itself; it shows sufficiently where it changes, where it concludes, where it begins, where it is resumed, without interlacing it with words of connection and joining, introduced for the behoof of weak and careless understandings, and without my annotating myself. Who does not prefer not to be read rather than to be read drowsily or hurriedly? (*c*) *Nihil est tam utile quod in transitu prosit.*[3] If to take books in the hand were to learn their contents, and if to look at them were to consider them, and to run through them were to grasp them, I should be mistaken in making myself out quite so ignorant as I say I am. (*b*) Since I can not arrest the attention of the reader by the weight of what I write, *manco male* if I arrest it by my intricacy. Yea, but he will afterward be sorry that he was stayed by it. That may be, but all the same he will have been stayed by it. And then there are dispositions of a kind in which understanding produces contempt; which will esteem me the more highly because they will not comprehend what I say; they will infer the profundity of my meaning by its obscurity, which,

[1] *Il luy faut certes quitter la maistrise et preeminence en la parlerie.*

[2] See Plato, *Laws*, book IV.

[3] There is nothing so useful that it is useful in passing. — Seneca, *Epistle* 2.

to speak in all sincerity, I greatly detest, and I would shun it if I knew how to shun myself. Aristotle somewhere boasts of affecting it.[1] An erroneous affectation! (*c*) Because the so frequent cutting up into chapters which I practised at the beginning has seemed to me to interrupt attention before it was born, and to break it up, making it scorn to apply itself and collect itself for so little, I have betaken myself to making them longer, which demands forethought and allotted leisure. In such an occupation, to him to whom you choose to give a single hour you choose to give nothing; and you do nothing for him for whom you do only while doing something else; to which it may be added that perchance I have some special compulsion to express myself only by halves, confusedly, and discordantly. (*b*) I was about to say that I have a grudge against this importunate reason, and these extravagant purposes which trouble life; and as for these subtle opinions, if they have any truth, I find it too clearly bought and unprofitable. On the contrary, I busy myself in shewing the value of very trifles and of doltishness, if it affords me pleasure; and I let myself follow my natural inclinations without overseeing them so closely.

I have seen in other lands ruined buildings and statues, and the sky and the earth; men are everywhere. That is quite true; and yet I could not so often revisit the tomb of that so great and so powerful city [2] that I should not marvel at it and revere it. Regard for the dead is enjoined upon us. Now, I was brought up from my childhood with the dead; I was familiar with the affairs of Rome long before I was with those of my own family. I knew the Capitol and its plan before I knew the Louvre, and the Tiber before the Seine. I had in my head the characters and fortunes of Lucullus, Metullus, and Scipio more than those of any of our fellow countrymen. They have departed; so has my father, — indeed, as completely as they, and is as distant from me and from life in eighteen years as these in sixteen hundred, — whose memory, affection, and companionship I none the less continue to embrace and cherish in a perfect and very vivid union. Verily, by my nature I

[1] See Aulus Gellius, XX, 5.5; Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*. [2] Rome.

give myself more dutifully to the departed; they can no longer aid themselves; therefore, it seems to me, they need my aid so much the more. Gratitude there is rightly in its lustre; beneficence is less nobly bestowed where there is reciprocal action and reflected good-will.[1] Arcesilaus, visiting Ctesibius who was ill, and finding him in a poor condition, very softly thrust under his pillow some money which he gave him, and by concealing it from him he gave him also quittance from thanking him.[2] They who have merited affection and gratitude from me have never lost it from being no longer here; I pay them the more fully and more heedfully when they are absent and unaware. I speak more fondly of my friends when there is no way of their knowing it. Thus I have entered into a hundred disputes in defence of Pompeius and in the cause of Brutus. This commerce still endures between us.

Even things that are present we have hold of only by imagination. Finding myself useless in this age, I throw myself into that other, and am thereby so ravished that the state of that ancient Rome, free, uncorrupt, and flourishing (for I love neither her infancy nor her old age), interests me and impassions me. Consequently I can not see the situation of their streets and their houses and those ruins whose foundations reach to the antipodes, so often that I do not wonder at them. (*c*) Is it naturally, or through an error of the imagination, that the sight of places that we know to have been frequented and dwelt in by persons whose memory is endeared to us, moves us in some sort more than to listen to the story of their deeds or to read their writings?[3] *Tanta vis admonitionis inest in locis! Et id quidem in hac urbe infinitum; quacumque enim ingredimur in aliquam historiam vestigium ponimus.*[4] (*b*) I enjoy look-

[1] *Retrogradation et reflexion.*

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Arcesilaus.* Montaigne first called the friend Appelles, which is the name given by Plutarch in telling the story in *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend.* On the Bordeaux copy of 1588, after reading Laertius, he changed the name to Ctesibius.

[3] See Cicero, *De Fin.*, V, 1.

[4] So great is the power of evocation that lies in places. . . . And of this there are countless examples in this city: for wherever we go, we set our foot upon history. — *Ibid.*, 1 and 2.

ing at their faces, their bearing, and their garments; I mumble to myself those great names, and make them echo in my ears. (*c*) *Ego illos veneror et tantis nominibus semper assurgo.*[1] (*b*) In matters which are in some parts great and admirable I admire even the commonplace parts. I would gladly see these people talk and walk about and sup together. It would be ingratitude to set naught by the relics and representations of so many worthy and brave men whom I have seen living and dying, and who give us so many good lessons by their example, if we but knew how to follow them.

And then this same Rome that we behold deserves to be beloved, having been allied to our crown for so long a time and by so many titles — the sole common and universal city; the sovereign ruler who commands there is likewise acknowledged elsewhere; it is the metropolitan city of all Christian nations; Spaniard and Frenchman both are at home there; to be one of the princes of that realm one needs only to be a prince of Christendom, wheresoever it be. There is no place here below that Heaven has embraced with such a flow of favour and such persistency; her very ruin is glorious and grandiose;

(*c*) Laudandis preciosior ruinis.[2]

(*b*) She still retains in the tomb the symbol and image of Empire. (*c*) *Ut palam sit uno in loco gaudentis opus esse naturæ.*[3] (*b*) Some man might censure himself and rebel inwardly at finding himself delighted by so vain a pleasure. The personal moods[4] which are agreeable to us are not too vain. Of whatever kind those may be which unfailingly give pleasure to a man capable of common intelligence, I could not have the heart to blame him.

I am much beholden to Fortune in that, to this hour, she has done me no excessive unkindness and beyond what I

[1] I reverence them and always rise at such names. — Seneca, *Epistle* 64.

[2] The more precious for her admirable ruins. — Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina*, XXIII, 62.

[3] So that it is clear that in a single place Nature must rejoice in her work. — Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, III, 5.

[4] *Nos humeurs.*

could bear. May it not be her way to leave in peace those by whom she is not importuned?

> Quanto quisque sibi plura negaverit,
> A dis plura feret. Nil cupientium
> Nudus castra peto.
> . . . Multa petentibus
> Desunt multa.[1]

If she thus continues, she will dismiss me well pleased and satisfied;

> Nihil supra
> Deos lacesso.[2]

But look out for accidents![3] There are thousands who founder in port. I console myself easily about what will happen here when I am gone; present things keep me sufficiently busy;

> Fortunæ cætera mando.[4]

Furthermore, I have not that strong tie which, they say, binds men to the future by the children who carry on their name and their honour; and I must needs perchance desire these things, if they be desirable, so much the less. I hold too much to the world and to this life by myself; I am best pleased to be in Fortune's clutches with regard to the circumstances personally necessary to my being, without otherwise extending her jurisdiction over me; and I have never thought that to be childless was a lack which must render life less complete and less contented. The vocation of sterility has indeed its advantages. Children are amongst those things which have not in them very much for which to be desired, especially in these days, when it would be so difficult to make them good men; (*c*) *bona jam*

[1] The more we renounce, the more we receive from the gods. Stripped of every thing, I seek the tents of those who desire nothing. . . . They who seek much lack much. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 16.21, 22, 42, 43.

[2] I ask nothing more of the gods. — *Ibid.*, II, 18.11.

[3] *Mais, gare le heurt!* Formerly a cry of drivers of cattle, or of persons meeting at cross-roads.

[4] I leave the rest to Fortune. — Ovid, *Metam.*, II, 140.

nec nasci licet, ita corrupta sunt semina;[1] (*b*) and yet have they in them exactly that which causes them to be regretted by him who loses them after having had them.

He who left me my establishment in charge prognosticated my ruin, in view of my little interest in the matters of an estate. He was mistaken: here am I, as well off as when I entered into my inheritance, if not a little better, though without any public office or church living. Moreover, if Fortune has done me no violent and unusual injury, neither has she done me any particular favour. All there is of her gifts in my family was there before me and more than a hundred years ago. I personally have no essential and solid good that I owe to her liberality; she has done me some airy, honorary, and titular favours, without substance; and has also, in truth, not granted them at my request, but freely presented them, God knows! to me who am all material, who am satisfied only with reality and that very substantial, and who, if I dare confess it, consider avarice hardly less excusable than ambition, or pain less to be avoided than shame, or health less desirable than learning, or wealth than nobility.

Amongst her vain favours I have none that so much gratifies this foolish humour which lives within me, as an authoritative edict of Roman citizenship, which was lately granted me when I was there — magnificent in seals and gold lettering, and granted with most gracious munificence. And because they are couched in divers styles more or less commendatory, and because, before I had seen one, I should have been very glad to be shewn a document of this kind, I think it well, to satisfy some one, if there be any one, who feels a curiosity like my own, to transcribe it here literally.

Quod Horatius Maximus, Martius Cecius, Alexander Mutus, almæ urbis conservatores de Illustrissimo viro Michaele Montano, equite sancti Michaelis, et a Cubiculo Regis Christianissimi, Romana civitate donando, ad Senatum retulerunt, S.P.Q.R. de ea re ita fieri censuit.

[1] Nothing good can now be born, so corrupt are the seeds. — Tertullian, *Apologetica*.

CUM veteri more et instituto cupide illi semper studioseque suscepti sint, qui virtute ac nobilitate præstantes, magno Reip. nostræ usui atque ornamento fuissent, vel esse aliquando possent: Nos majorum nostrorum exemplo atque auctoritate permoti, præclaram hanc Consuetudinem nobis imitandam ac servandam fore censemus. Quamobrem cum Illustrissimus Michael Montanus Eques sancti Michaelis, et a cubiculo Regis Christianissimi, Romani nominis studiosissimus, et familiæ laude atque splendore et propriis virtutum meritis dignissimus sit, qui summo Senatus Populique Romani judicio ac studio in Romanam Civitatem adsciscatur, placere Senatui P.Q.R. Illustrissimum Michaelem Montanum rebus omnibus ornatissimum, atque huic inclyto Populo charissimum, ipsum posterosque, in Romanam civitatem adscribi, ornarique omnibus et præmiis et honoribus, quibus illi fruuntur, qui Cives Patritiique Romani nati aut jure optimo facti sunt. In quo censere Senatum P.Q.R. se non tam illi Jus Civitatis largiri quam debitum tribuere, neque magis beneficium dare quam ab ipso accipere, qui hoc Civitatis munere accipiendo, singulari Civitatem ipsam ornamento atque honore affecerit. Quam quidem S.C. auctoritatem iidem Conservatores per Senatus P.Q.R. scribas in acta referri atque in Capitolii curia servari, privilegiumque hujusmodi fieri, solitoque urbis sigillo communiri, curarunt. Anno ab urbe condito CXCCCXXXI. post Christum natum M.D.LXXXI.III. Idus Martii.

Horatius Fuscus sacri S.P.Q.R. scriba.

Vincent. Martholus sacri S.P.Q.R. scriba.[1]

[1] On the report made to the Senate by Orazio Massimi, Marzo Cecio, and Alessandro Muti, Conservators of the bountiful city, with regard to endowing with Roman citizenship the most illustrious Michel de Montaigne, knight of the Order of St. Michel and gentleman of the Chamber of the Most Christian King, the Senate and People of Rome have decreed as follows:

Whereas, according to ancient custom and decree those have always been eagerly received who have excelled in virtue and nobility, and who have been, or who at any time might be, of great use and ornament to our Republic, We, moved by the example and influence of our forefathers, decree that this famous custom is to be imitated and preserved by us. Wherefore, since the most illustrious Michel de Montaigne, knight of the Order of St. Michel, and gentleman of the Chamber of the Most Christian King, is filled with zeal for the Roman name,

Being a burgess of no [foreign] city, I was very glad to become so of the noblest city that ever was or ever will be.

If other men scrutinised themselves as I do, they would find themselves, as I do, full of inanity and witlessness. I can not rid myself of these qualities without getting rid of myself. We are all steeped in them, one man as well as another, but they who are conscious of this have thereby a little better bargain; yet I do not know.

This common fashion and custom of looking elsewhere than at ourselves has well served us. It[1] is an object replete with dissatisfaction; we see there only wretchedness and emptiness. To avoid discomforting us, Nature has fitly directed the action of our vision outside ourselves. We are carried forward with the current, but to turn backward toward ourselves is a difficult movement; so do the waves of the sea break confusedly and dash against one another when they are driven back upon themselves. Regard, every one says, the changes of the sky; regard the public affairs — this man's quarrel, that one's pulse, this other's

and is, both on account of the splendour of his family and on account of his own merits, most worthy of admission by the special vote and the good-will of the Roman Senate and People to Roman citizenship, it has pleased the Senate and People of Rome that the most illustrious Michel de Montaigne, distinguished in all things and very dear to this renowned People, be enrolled, he and his heirs, in the Roman citizenship, and be granted all the honours and advantages which those enjoy who were born citizens and patricians of Rome, or who have by full process of law been made such. And in this they believe that the Senate and People of Rome do not so much bestow on him the right of citizenship as a gift, as discharge a debt, and that they no more confer a favour on him than receive one from him, who, by accepting this gift of the State, has shed on this very citizenship a peculiar distinction and honour. Which act of the Senate's authority the same Conservators have had recorded by the secretaries of the Senate and People of Rome, and deposited in the archives of the Capitol, and have had the prerogative engrossed and sealed with the ordinary seal of the city. In the year after the foundation of Rome 2331, and after the birth of Jesus Christ 1581, March 13.

Orazio Fosco
Secretary of the Sacred Senate and People of Rome.
Vincente Martoli
Secretary of the Sacred Senate and People of Rome.

[1] That is, ourselves.

testament; in fine, regard things above or below, or at one side, or before or behind you. It was a paradoxical command that the god at Delphi gave us in ancient times: look within yourself; know yourself; keep close to yourself; call back to yourself your mind and your will, which are wasted elsewhere; you slip away from yourself, you scatter yourself abroad; concentrate yourself, uphold yourself; you are betrayed, you are despoiled, you are stolen from yourself. Dost thou not see that this world demands all vision to be bent within and all eyes opened to self-contemplation? For thee all is vanity, within and without, but less vanity when it is less enlarged. "Except thee, O man," said that god, "every thing first studies itself and according to its need has limits to its labours and desires. There is not another thing so empty and necessitous as thou art, who dost embrace the universe; thou art the seeker without knowledge, the magistrate without jurisdiction, and, when all is said, the clown of the play."

CHAPTER X

OF THE MANAGEMENT OF ONE'S WILL[1]

SAINTE-BEUVE has said of this Essay that it was inspired by Montaigne's remembrances of his mayoralty. This is to a high degree true, but the Essay is greater than this alone would indicate. It is an admirable plea for the point of view which considers the *man* as, in every sense, of more importance than the *office;* which estimates what a man can *do* as of little consequence in comparison with what he can *be*, and can be *for himself alone*. Since (in theory) all the work of public life is, at bottom, for the purpose of obtaining happiness for men as individuals, Montaigne aims at once at the result (he does not say so), and urges, only by the expression of his own opinion, every man to make *himself* "happy." It need scarcely be indicated that the weakness in this revolutionising and "impressive" reasoning is the fact that it is not entirely

[1] Sainte-Beuve's article on "Montaigne maire de Bordeaux" (*Nouveaux Lundis*, VI) should be read, without fail, in connection with this chapter. A letter from Montaigne to the maréchal de Matignon, which is to be found in several editions of the Essays, should also be read; and there is another letter of similar character, which was discovered only in 1863, and has not often been printed.

a matter of will, of personal effort, but of spiritual good-fortune, if happiness is attained in unhappy circumstances, if a scourged slave can be content; and it is not easy, and it is questionable if it be right, for a free man — using "freedom" and "slavery" in their widest application — to be happy in the presence of misery, without doing his utmost to relieve it. And to do one's "utmost" in this direction is the kind of life of which Montaigne says: "This fashion of life that I praise in another I do not like to follow myself: and I am not without excuse."

His "excuse" is set forth in this Essay, as elsewhere, wonderfully well, but not convincingly. But perhaps no Essay is of more valuable weight than this in balancing the mind justly, in opposition to the influences of to-day, concerning the claims of the active and the inactive life. And nowhere has Montaigne's voice more personal authority than here, being the voice of one whose ability in *work*, in active work, is as unquestionable to those who carefully study his life as in *meditation*.

But his all-justifying "excuse" is something he never himself thought of in that light: the production of the Essays. It is impossible not to believe that he has served and aided more fellow men by this means than he could have done by any devotion to public interests during his lifetime. And the conclusion that must always be reached is that each man must — and *should* — act according to his nature.

I think this Essay might well begin on the last page of the preceding one, with the sentence: "This common fashion and custom of looking elsewhere than at ourselves," etc. Montaigne goes on to assert (ironically) that mankind does well not to "consider" itself, to look always elsewhere than inwards, and then, quoting the Delphian oracle, he cries out with scorn to think that man, the poorest of all animals, should be the only one who foolishly embraces the universe.

This is a fit introduction to the opening of this Essay, where he says that he himself does not attempt to embrace the universe, that both from nature and by effort he "espouses very few things." And he states admirably *why* he will "not go far from himself"; he describes excellently those whose minds "find rest in motion; who busy themselves about the quarrels of one neighbour, and the pulse of another, and the will of a third."

Then he turns to his own public employment as mayor, to explain his acceptance of it and to describe his mode of executing it. The thought of his father's mode of executing it leads him back to the same reflection as before, that the greater number of the rules and precepts current in the world assume it to be a fine effect to turn us away from ourselves.

He dwells still on the character of the friendship we owe to ourselves, setting forth that it implies public duties, and he utters the noble truth: "He who does not live somewhat for others scarcely lives for himself." Returning later to the claims of public affairs, there is a sentence that has been too much overlooked in depicting Montaigne as an easy-going egotist: "I would not that he should refuse his attention, his steps, his words, his sweat, and his blood if there be need."

In the letter, dated May 22, 1585, addressed by Montaigne (mayor) to M. de Matignon, then lieutenant for the king at Bordeaux, — a letter of which Sainte-Beuve says: "It shews us Montaigne in the full exercise of his office, and in all the activity and vigilance in his power. The *soi-disant* idler had, at need, many more of these active qualities than he promised," — he assured the marshal: "We shall spare nothing, neither our care, nor, if need be, our lives, to retain every thing under subjection to the king." Sainte-Beuve remarks: "Montaigne was not prodigal of protestations and phrases, and what with others would be a mere form is here a real and verified engagement."

To return to the Essay itself: Montaigne, speaking of public affairs in general, passes from depicting the manner in which many men *assume* them — incorporate themselves in them — to speak of his own personal separation from them, and of his relation to the public parties of his day, and then of the relation of the people to the public parties, declaring: "It is a mistake to throw ourselves so headlong in pursuit of our inclinations and our interests." As who do? "The feverish parties," I think, of the preceding page; "the minds which stupidly see things only by halves."

These several pages in the spirit of the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," are interesting and characteristic, and so peculiarly *undulating* and living that no dead résumé can be made of them. They are not difficult, but they need the most careful reading.

Later he takes up again his own conditions as mayor; and later still the foundations of fame. In the long last paragraph he himself is again his subject.

IN comparison with most men, few things touch me, or, to say better, have any hold upon me; for it is reasonable to be touched by them, provided they do not have possession of us. I take great care to increase by study and reflection this quality of insensitiveness which is naturally well developed in me. Consequently, I espouse and am greatly interested by few things. My sight is clear, but I fasten it upon few objects; my perception [1] is delicate and pliant; but I am slow and dull in apprehension and application. I with difficulty bind myself to any thing. So far as I can, I give my whole attention to myself; and even in relation to this subject I would readily somewhat curb and hold back my interest from too completely entering into it, since it is a subject which I possess at the mercy of others and over which Fortune has more rights than I; [2] so that, even in the matter of health, — which I rank so high, — it

[1] *Le sens.* [2] These last clauses are very obscure.

would be well for me not so intensely to desire it and devote myself to it as to find sickness unbearable. (*c*) We should moderate equally hatred of pain and love of pleasure, and Plato prescribes an intermediate course betwixt the two.[1] (*b*) But the interests which draw me away from myself and rivet me elsewhere, those indeed I oppose with all my strength. My opinion is that a man must lend himself to others and give himself only to himself. If my will found it easy to pledge and adapt itself, it would be the end of me; I am too thin-skinned both by nature and by habit, —

Fugax rerum, securaque in otia natus.[2]

The contested and obstinate discussions that would finally give the advantage to my opponent, the result that would make my heated persistence shameful, would perchance chafe me cruelly. If I attacked the source of the matter,[3] as others do, my soul would never have the strength to endure the shocks and emotions which accompany those who undertake so much; it would immediately be unhinged by this inward agitation. If at times I have been forced into the handling of other people's affairs, I have promised to take them in hand, not to be completely engrossed by them;[4] to burden myself with them, not to make them a part of myself; to pay heed to them, yes; to be excited about them, not at all; I consider them, but I do not brood over them. I have enough to do to order and arrange the crowd of domestic concerns that I have at heart,[5] without admitting there, and being overwhelmed by, outside concerns; and I am sufficiently occupied by my own essential affairs, proper and natural to me, without inviting others foreign to me. They who know how much they owe to themselves, and by how many duties they are bound to themselves, find that Nature has given them a mission ample enough and in no wise idle: "You have very much to do at home — do not go far away."

[1] See Plato, *Laws*, book VII.

[2] Avoiding affairs, and born for care-free leisure. — Ovid, *Tristia*, III, 2.9.

[3] *Si je mordois à mesme.*

[4] *De les prendre en main, non pas au poulmon et au foye.*

[5] *Que j'ay dans mes entrailles et dans mes veines.*

Men hire themselves out; their faculties are not for themselves, but for those to whom they enslave themselves; it is their tenants, not themselves, who occupy the house. This inclination to connect myself with others [1] does not please me. We must be careful about the liberty of our soul and we must pledge it only on rightful occasions, which are very few in number if we judge wisely. Observe those persons who have acquired the habit of letting themselves be seized upon and carried away: it is so with them in all things, in small matters as in great, in what concerns them not as in what does concern them; they throw themselves indifferently into any thing going on, and lack life if they lack irregular excitement. (*c*) *In negotiis sunt, negotii causa;*[2] they seek business only to be busy. It is not so much that they desire to be moving, as that they can not keep still; exactly like a rolling stone which is not checked until it has come to the bottom.[3] Occupation is to a certain sort of man a mark of ability and of dignity. (*b*) Their minds seek repose by being swung back and forth, like children in the cradle. They might say that they are serviceable to their friends in proportion as they are irksome to themselves. No one distributes his money amongst others; every one does so distribute his time and his life; there is nothing of which we are so lavish as of those things about which alone avarice would be useful and laudable.[4] I am of a wholly different humour; I think only of myself, and usually desire very mildly what I desire, and I desire little; occupying myself and likewise busying myself at intervals and tranquilly. Whatever they determine upon and take in hand, that they do with all their will and earnestness. There are so many dangerous places for our feet that, for greater safety, we must glide through this world rather lightly and superficially, (*c*) and slide over it, not break through. (*b*) Even pleasure is painful in its depth;

[1] *Cette humeur commune.*

[2] Seneca, *Epistle* 22. Montaigne translates the words after quoting them.

[3] See Idem, *Epistle* 94.

[4] See Idem, *De Brevitate Vitæ*, III, 1.

Incedis per ignes
Suppositos cineri doloso.[1]

The high authorities [2] of Bordeaux elected me mayor of their city when I was far from France and still farther from such a thought. I declined; but they shewed me that I was wrong, the king's command also interposing in the matter. It is an office which should seem the more desirable because it brings neither praise nor profit other than the honour of administering it; the term is two years, but it may be prolonged by the second election, which rarely occurs. It was accorded to me, and had been but twice before — to monsieur de Lansac some years earlier, and recently to monsieur de Biron, marshal of France, whom I succeeded; and I left the place to monsieur de Matignon, also marshal of France, proud of such noble fellowship;

(*c*) Uterque bonus pacis bellique minister.[3]

(*b*) Chance chose to share in my promotion by this special circumstance, not at all unimportant, which she herself gave to it; for Alexander was disdainful of the Corinthian ambassadors who offered him the citizenship of their city; but when they announced to him that Bacchus and Hercules were also on that register, he graciously thanked them.

On taking office, I faithfully and conscientiously depicted myself as just what I feel myself to be: without memory, without vigilance, without experience, and without vigour; also without hatred, without ambition, without avarice, and without violence, that they might be informed and apprised of what they had to expect from my service. And because their knowledge of my late father and honour for his memory had alone incited them to do this, I plainly added that I should be very sorry that any thing whatever should so much affect me as their affairs and their city had formerly affected him while he had the administration of them in the same post to which they had summoned me. I remembered that, in my childhood, I had

[1] You pass through fires concealed beneath treacherous ashes. — Horace, *Odes*, II, 1.7.

[2] *Messieurs*.

[3] Good administrators both, in peace and in war. — Virgil, *Æneid*, XI, 658. The original has: *pacisque bonas bellique ministras*.

seen him, an old man,[1] cruelly perturbed by the hurried public activities, neglecting the pleasant air of his house, where the feebleness of advancing years had long since confined him, and his household affairs and his health, and certainly disdaining his life, which he came near losing in that employment, being compelled in their behalf to take long and difficult journeys. Such was he; and this disposition was due to a great natural kindliness; never was there a more charitable and accessible soul. This way of proceeding, which I praise in another, I do not like to follow, and I am not without excuse.

He had heard it said that we must needs forget ourselves for our neighbour's sake; that the private individual was not to be considered in comparison with the public interest. Most of the rules and precepts of the world take the course of forcing us out of ourselves and driving us into public view for the use of society as a whole; they have thought to produce a fine effect by diverting and distracting us from ourselves, presupposing that we were attached to ourselves only too closely and by a too natural tie; and to this end they have said all that could be said; for it is nothing new for the wise to preach things that may be of service, not things that may be true. (*c*) Truth has for us its embarrassments, disadvantages, and incompatibilities. We must often deceive that we may not ourselves be deceived, and shut our eyes and dull our wits, in order to benefit and amend them: *imperiti enim judicant, et qui frequenter in hoc ipsum fallendi sunt ne errent.*[2] (*b*) When they command us to love, more than ourselves, things of three, four, and fifty different kinds, they imitate the art of archers, who, to hit the mark, aim high above it. To straighten a bent stick we bend it in the contrary way.[3]

I believe that in the temple of Pallas, as we see in all other forms of religion, there were visible mysteries shewn to the people, and other mysteries, more secret and lofty,

[1] Pierre Eyquem, Montaigne's father, was chosen mayor of Bordeaux for two years, August 1, 1554.

[2] Ignorant men pass judgement, and they often have to be deceived, lest they go astray. — Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, II, 17.28.

[3] See Plutarch, *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend.*

shewn only to the initiated. It is apparent that in such as these latter is found the true nature of the friendship which every man owes to himself — (*c*) not a false friendship which leads us to embrace glory, learning, wealth, and such matters with predominant and immoderate affection, as essential parts of our existence, (*b*) nor a weak and inconsiderate friendship, in which that happens which is seen in the ivy, that it decays and ruins the wall to which it clings; but a salutary and well-ordered friendship, equally beneficial and agreeable. He who knows its duties and fulfils them has truly the familiar companionship of the Muses;[1] he has attained the very summit of human wisdom and of our happiness. Knowing exactly what he owes to himself, he finds in the part he has to play that he must adapt to himself the conditions of other men and of the world, and, to do this, must contribute to society at large the duties and services which belong to it. (*c*) He who does not live somewhat for others scarcely lives for himself: *qui sibi amicus est, scito hunc amicum omnibus esse.*[2] (*b*) The chief charge we have is for each one his own conduct. (*c*) And this is why we are here. (*b*) As he would be a fool who should forget to live a good and godly life and should think that he had fulfilled his duty by guiding and teaching others so to do, so not less he who abandons, to serve others, a healthy and cheerful life for himself, adopts, in my opinion, a wrong and unnatural course. I would not that a man should deny to the offices that he assumes his attention, his steps, his words, his sweat, and, if need be, his blood, —

Non ipse pro charis amicis
Aut patria timidus perire,[3] —

but only by way of loan, and, incidentally, the mind maintaining itself always in repose and in health; not without action, but without vexation, without passion. Mere action costs it so little that even when sleeping it acts. But we

[1] *Il est vrayment du cabinet des Muses.*

[2] Know that he who is a friend to himself is friend to all men. — Seneca, *Epistle* 6. The text of Seneca is changed.

[3] Not afraid to die for his dear friends, or for his fatherland. — Horace, *Odes*, IV, 9.51.

must set it in motion with due consideration; for whilst the body receives the burdens that are laid on it for just what they are, the mind often enlarges them and weights them at its own expense, giving them such proportions as seems well to it.[1] We effect things that are similar with varying efforts and different exertions of the will. The character of the doing is not dependent on the character of the thing done;[2] for how many men risk their lives every day in wars that matter not to them, and press forward into the dangers of battles the loss of which will not disturb their next night's sleep! Whereas a man in his own house, safe from that danger which he would not have dared to face, is more passionately moved about the results of this war than is the soldier who gives his blood and his life to it, and his soul is more exercised.

I have been able to take part in public affairs, without quitting myself by a hair's breadth, (*c*) and to give myself to others without losing myself.[3] (*b*) The vehemence and intensity of desire hinders more than it serves, in carrying on what we undertake;[4] it fills us with impatience when events are unpropitious or tardy, and with bitterness and distrust toward those persons with whom we are dealing. We never guide well the affairs by which we are obsessed and guided.

(*c*) Male cuncta ministrat
Impetus.[5]

(*b*) He who employs in the matter only his judgement and his skill proceeds in it more blithely; he makes believe, he gives way, he procrastinates, quite at his ease, according to the needs of the moment; he misses his stroke without dismay and distress, being ready and prepared for a new attempt; he walks always with the reins in his hands. In him who is intoxicated by violent and tyrannical intentions, we find of necessity much imprudence and injustice; the impetuosity of his desire carries him away. His impulses are reckless, and, unless Fortune lends much aid, they bear

[1] See Plutarch, *Of Banishment.*
[2] *L'un va bien sans l'autre.*
[3] See Seneca, *Epistle* 62.
[4] See Idem, *De Ira*, I, 12.
[5] Passion manages every thing badly. — Statius, *Thebaïd*, X, 704. Montaigne took the quotation from J. Lipsius, *Politics*, III, 6.

little fruit. Philosophy directs that, in chastising offences received, we turn away from anger, not to the end that our vengeance may be less, but, on the contrary, that it may be the better aimed and heavier, which result philosophy considers that impetuosity tends to hinder.[1] (*c*) Not only is anger disquieting, but in itself it enfeebles the arm of those who chastise; this flame dulls and consumes their strength. (*b*) As in precipitancy, *festinatio tarda est*,[2] haste trips itself up,[3] fetters and delays itself. (*c*) *Ipsa se velocitas implicat.*[4] (*b*) For example, as I see by common experience, avarice has no greater impediment than itself; the more intent on its object and vigorous it is, the less fertile is it. Usually it seizes upon riches more quickly when it is disguised by an appearance of liberality.

A most worthy gentleman, a friend of mine, impaired the soundness of his brain by a too eager attention and devotion to the affairs of a prince, his master,[5] which master thus described himself to me: that he perceives the importance of occurrences as clearly as any other; but that in regard to those for which there is no remedy, he instantly resigns himself to endurance; as for the others, after having arranged the necessary preparations, which he can do promptly from the activity of his mind, he awaits tranquilly what may ensue. In fact, I myself have seen him maintain great indifference and freedom in action and manner whilst concerned with very important and difficult affairs. I find him greater and more able in ill-fortune than in good. (*c*) His defeats bring him more glory than his victory, and his affliction more than his triumph.

(*b*) Observe that, even in unimportant and trival occupations, — in playing chess, tennis, and the like, — the keen and ardent pressure of impetuous desire immediately throws the mind and the limbs into indiscriminate and disorderly action. We are bewildered and embarrassed by ourselves. He who carries himself more moderately

[1] See Seneca, *De Ira*, I, 15 and 16.
[2] Haste is slow. — Quintus Curtius, IX, 9.12.
[3] *La hastivité se donne elle mesme la jambe.*
[4] Swiftness entangles itself. — Seneca, *Epistle* 44.
[5] The King of Navarre, afterward Henri IV.

about gain and loss is always at his ease;[1] the less pricked and excited he is by the gain, the more advantageously and safely does he conduct it. Furthermore, we hinder the mind's power of seizure and holding fast by giving it so many things to grasp. Some we must simply present to it, others attach to it, and still others incorporate in it. It can see and feel all things, but it should feed only on itself and be instructed as to what properly concerns it and what is properly its possession and its substance. The laws of Nature teach us what is rightly necessary for us. When wise men tell us that by nature no one is indigent, and that by general opinion every one is so, they herein distinguish between the desires that come from her and those that come from the unruliness of our imagination. Those of which we see the end are hers, those which flee before us and of which we can not overtake the end are our own.[2] Poverty in worldly goods is easy to cure; poverty of the soul, impossible.

(*c*) Nam si, quod satis est homini, id satis esse potesset,
Hoc sat erat; nunc, quum hoc non est, qui credimus porro
Divitias ullas animum mi explere potesse?[3]

Socrates, on seeing a great quantity of riches, jewels, and costly stuffs borne in pomp through his city, exclaimed: "How many things I do not desire!"[4] (*b*) Metrodorus lived on twelve ounces in weight a day; Epicurus, on less;[5] Metrocles slept in winter with the sheep and in summer in the cloisters of churches.[6] (*c*) *Sufficit ad id natura quod poscit.*[7] Cleanthes lived by his hands, and boasted that Cleanthes, if he so wished, could support still another Cleanthes.[8]

[1] *Il est toujours chez soi.* [2] See Seneca, *Epistle* 16, 7 and 9.

[3] For if what is sufficient for man could suffice for him, this would be enough; but now, since this is not so, how are we to believe that any riches could satisfy my desire? — Lucilius, book V, quoted by Nonius Marcellus, *De Differentia*, etc., V, 98.

[4] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 32. [5] See Seneca, *Epistle* 18.

[6] See Plutarch, *That vice alone suffices to make man unhappy.*

[7] Nature provides for what it requires. — Seneca, *Epistle* 90.

[8] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Cleanthes.* It was Zeno who said this of Cleanthes.

(*b*) If what Nature precisely and from the first demands of us for the preservation of our existence is too little (as, in truth, how much it is so and how cheaply our life can be supported can not be better expressed than by this consideration, that it is so little that it escapes the grasp and shock of fortune by its littleness), let us allot ourselves something more; let us give the name of Nature to the customs and conditions of each of us; let us value ourselves and deal with ourselves by this measure; let us stretch our belongings and our reckonings to that extent, for, so far as that, it truly seems to me that we have some excuse. Accustomedness is a second nature and no less powerful; (*c*) what is lacking that I am accustomed to I hold is lacking in myself; (*b*) and I should like almost as well to have my life taken from me as to have it diminished and retrenched very far below the conditions in which I have lived so long. I am not now in a condition for a great change and plunge into a new and unwonted course, not even a better one; it is too late to become different. And I should deplore any great luck that might fall to my lot at this hour, because it had not come at a time when I could enjoy it.

Quo mihi fortuna, si non conceditur uti? [1]

(*c*) I should deplore likewise any inward gain. It were almost better never, than so tardily, to become a man of worth and of understanding how to live, when one no longer has life. I, who am about to depart, would readily resign to one who comes later what wisdom I have learned about intercourse with the world — mustard after dinner. I have no use for the well-being with which I can do nothing. What does knowledge avail him who has no longer a head? It is an affront and unkindness of Fortune to offer us gifts which fill us with just vexation that we had them not in their season. Guide me no longer, I can no longer walk. Of all the members that ability possesses, patience is sufficient for us. Shall the talent of an excellent tenor be

[1] To what purpose have I good-fortune, if I may not make use of it? — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 5.12.

given to a singer whose lungs are diseased, and eloquence to the hermit relegated to the deserts of Arabia?[1]

(*b*) To fall requires no skill; (*c*) the end comes of itself at the conclusion of each piece of work. My world has passed away, my form expired; I am wholly of the past and am bound to give authority to it and to conform my exit to it. I want to say this by way of example: that the recent disappearance, by the Pope's decree, of ten days[2] has taken me so aback that I can not properly adjust myself to it; I belong to the years when we reckoned differently. So old and long a habit claims me and draws me back to it; I am constrained by being something of a heretic in this respect, not acceptant of innovation even when corrective. My imagination, do what I may,[3] is always ten days before or behind, and mumbles in my ear: "This rule concerns those who are yet to exist." If health even, sweet as it is, comes to me by fits and starts, it gives me cause for regret rather than enjoyment of it; I no longer have ground for welcoming it. Time departs from me, without which nothing can be enjoyed. Oh, how little account would I make of those great elective offices which I see in the world, which are given only to men about to go hence, as to whom it is not so much considered how fitly they will be employed as how long they will be employed! From the moment of their entrance, their exit is in view. (*b*) In short, here am I about to finish this man, not to make from him another. By long habit this form has become substance, and accident nature.[4]

I say, then, that every one of us feeble creatures is excusable for regarding as properly his what is included within this extent; but equally beyond these limits there is naught but confusion; this is the greatest latitude that we should give to our rights. The more we amplify our needs and our possessions, the more we expose ourselves to the blows

[1] In this passage of 1595, from the quotation from Horace above, the text of 1588 is considerably expanded and modified.

[2] In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII reformed the calendar by dropping ten days.

[3] *En despit de mes dents.*

[4] *Cette forme m'est passée en substance, et fortune en nature.*

of fortune and of adversity. The field of our desires would be circumscribed and confined to a brief space of the nearest and contiguous advantages;[1] and, furthermore, their course should be conducted, not in a straight line which ends nowhere, but in a circle of which the two points meet and terminate in ourselves by a brief circuit. Actions which are carried on without this return on oneself — I mean an immediate and essential return,[2] like those of the avaricious and ambitious and so many others who run straight ahead,[3] whose course always carries them forward — these are erroneous and unsound actions.

Most of our performances are like a stage-play; *mundus universus exercet histrioniam.*[4] We must play our part duly, but as the part of a borrowed personage. We must not make of the mask and outer garb a real being, nor make our own what is foreign to us. We do not know how to distinguish the skin from the shirt. (*c*) It is enough to disguise the face without disguising the breast. (*b*) I see those who transform and metamorphose themselves into new shapes and new beings as numerous as the public duties that they assume, and who play the dignitary[5] even to their heart and bowels, and carry their office with them even into their retiring room. It is not for me to teach them to distinguish the cap-doffings[6] which are paid to themselves from those paid to their office, or their retinue, or their mule. *Tantum se fortunæ permittunt etiam ut naturam dediscant.*[7] They puff up and distend their minds and their natural talk in accordance with the height of their magisterial position. The mayor and Montaigne have always been two, with a very distinct separation. Because a man is a lawyer or a financier, he must not ignore the knavery there is in such professions. A worthy man is not responsible for the vice or folly of his profession, and ought not

[1] See Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Animi*, X.

[2] *S'entend voisine reflexion et essentielle.* [3] *De pointe.*

[4] The whole world performs a play. — A fragment of Petronius, taken by Montaigne from J. Lipsius, *De Constantia*, I, 8.

[5] *Se prelatent.* [6] *Les bonnetades.*

[7] They give themselves over to fortune only so far as to forget nature. — Quintus Curtius, III, 2.18. Montaigne has taken some liberty with the text.

because of that to refuse to practise it; it is the custom of his country and it is of profit; we must live in the world and make use of it as we find it. But the judgement of an emperor should be above his empire and should view it and consider it as an external accident; and he should be able to find pleasure in himself apart, and to have companionship, like Jacques and Pierre, at least with himself.

It is not in me to pledge myself very deeply and very completely. When my will connects me with one party, it is not with so binding a tie that my understanding is thereby infected. In the present confusion of this state my personal concern has not made me ignore either the praiseworthy qualities in my adversaries or those that are reprehensible in the leaders whom I have followed. (*c*) Others adore every thing on their side; as for me, I do not even excuse the greater part of things done by my party; and a good piece of work does not lose its charm in my eyes because it argues against me. (*b*) Except as regards the knot of the controversy, I have held myself in equanimity and simple indifference; (*c*) *neque extra necessitates belli præcipuum odium gero;*[1] (*b*) for which I am pleased with myself, inasmuch as I see the opposite erroneous course to be common.[2] They who extend their angry hatred beyond public matters, as most men do, shew that it springs from other sources and from a personal cause; just as, when fever persists in one who is cured of an ulcer, it shews that it had another more hidden origin. (*c*) It is because they have nothing against the cause in general, as it attacks the welfare of all and of the state, but are wroth with it only in so far as it preys upon them in private. That is why they are spurred by private passion, and beyond justice and what concerns the public — *non tam omnia universi quam ea quæ ad quemque pertinerent singuli carpebant.*[3] (*b*) I desire the advantage to be on our side, but I am not furious if it is not so.

[1] And I feel no deadly hatred beyond the necessities of war. — Source unknown.

[2] *D'autant que je voy communement faillir au contraire.*

[3] They did not all find fault with every thing, but each one with the things that concerned himself. — Livy, XXXIV, 36.

(*c*) I adhere steadfastly to the sanest of the parties; but I do not seek to be specially noted as inimical to the others and further than the general cause induces. I prodigiously blame this vicious way of judging: "He is of the League, for he admires the charm of monsieur de Guise"; "The activity of the King of Navarre astonishes him — he is a Huguenot"; "He finds this lacking in the king's conduct — he is seditious at heart"; and I did not concede even to a person in authority that he was justified in condemning a book for numbering a heretic among the best poets of this age.[1] Should we not dare to say of a thief that he has a fine leg? Faut-il, si elle est putain, qu'elle soit aussi punaise?[2] In wiser times did they revoke the proud title of Capitolinus, which had previously been given to Marcus Manlius as the preserver of religion and public liberty? Did they stifle the memory of his beneficence and feats of arms, and of the military reward granted to his valour, because he afterward aimed at sovereignty to the prejudice of the laws of his country?[3] If they have come to hate an orator, the next day he becomes to them not eloquent. I have touched elsewhere on the zeal which impels men of worth into such error. For my part, I can easily say, "That thing he does wickedly and this thing virtuously"; likewise with regard to prognostics or sinister incidents in affairs, they desire every man of their party to be blind or stupefied; and our conviction and our judgement to subserve, not truth, but an idea proceeding from our desires. I should err rather toward the other extreme, so greatly do I fear that my desire may mislead me. Add to this that I am somewhat sensitively distrustful about things that I desire.

I have seen wonders in my day in the indiscreet and prodigious facility of the people of a country in letting their belief and their hope be led and governed as it has pleased and served their leaders, overlooking hundreds of short-

[1] Montaigne tells in the *Journal de Voyage* (Rome) of the criticisms of his book made by the censor, and that among them objection was taken to what he said of heretical poets (Théodore de Bèze) in the Essay "Of Presumption" (Book II, chap. 17).

[2] It is impossible to render this play upon words in translation.

[3] See Livy, VI, 18.

comings, one after another, overlooking phantasms and dreams. I am no longer surprised at those whom the absurdities of Apollonius and Mohammed led by the nose.[1] Their sense and understanding are completely smothered by their passion; their judgement no longer has any other choice than what smiles upon them and encourages their cause. I had especially observed this in the first of our feverish troubles. This other, of later birth, whilst resembling it, goes beyond it; whence I conclude that it is an inseparable characteristic of popular errors. Opinions press on after the first that sets off, driven, like the waves, by the wind. A man is not a member of the body if he can dissent from it, if he does not follow along the common course; but certainly wrong is done to the upright parties when we seek to assist them by imposture. I have always been opposed to this. This method is effective only upon weak brains; for the sound ones there are ways more sure, and not simply more honourable, of keeping up their courage and explaining away unfavourable happenings.

(*b*) The heavens have never again seen, nor ever will see in the future, so mighty an opposition as that of Cæsar and Pompeius. Yet it seems to me that I discern in those noble souls great freedom from ill-will[2] toward each other. It was a rivalry in honour and in power, without malignity and disparagement, which did not carry them to violent and inconsiderate hatred. In their sharpest contests I discover some persisting respect and good-will; and from this I judge that, had it been possible, each of them would have desired to gain his end without the overthrow of his rival, rather than by his overthrow. How far otherwise it was with Marius and Sylla! Take notice of this.

We must not rush so madly in pursuit of our desires and interests. As in my youth I resisted the progress of love, which I felt to be gaining too fast upon me, and took care that it should not be so agreeable to me that it might end by putting force upon me and holding me captive quite at its mercy, so I do likewise on all other occasions into which my will enters (*c*) with too much zest: (*b*) I lean in the

[1] *De ceux que les singeries d'Apollonius et de Mahumed embufflerent.*
[2] *Une grande moderation.*

direction opposite to her inclination as I see her sink and become drunken with her wine;[1] I avoid nourishing her pleasure to such a degree that I can not take it from her without a bleeding loss. Souls which from stupidity see things only by halves enjoy this good-fortune, that harmful things wound them less; it is a mental leprosy which has some appearance of health, and such health as philosophy does not at all despise; but none the less it is not reasonable to call it wisdom, which we often do. And on this ground some one in ancient times made sport of Diogenes, who in mid-winter, entirely naked, embraced a snow-image, as a test of his endurance. This man, meeting him in that posture, said to him: "Are you not very cold now?" "Not the least," replied Diogenes. "Why, then," rejoined the other, "do you think you are doing something that is difficult and exemplary in standing there?"[2] To measure endurance, it is necessary to know suffering.

But the souls which are to behold adverse occurrences and the affronts of fortune in their depth and sharpness, which are to weigh and taste them according to the bitterness and burden of their nature — let them employ their skill in saving themselves from entering into their causes and turning back their approach. What did King Cotys do? He paid liberally for the rich and beautiful dish which had been brought to him; because it was singularly fragile, he immediately broke it himself, to get rid of so easy a matter for wrath against his servants.[3] (*c*) For a similar reason, I have gladly avoided having my affairs confused with those of others and have not desired that my lands should touch only those of my kindred and of persons to whom I am united by close friendship; for thence commonly spring subjects of alienation and breaking off of fellowship.

(*b*) I used to like games of chance of cards and dice; I gave them up long ago, solely because whatever good outward appearance I made when I lost, I did not fail to feel an inward pang. A man of honour who feels keenly being

[1] *Je me penche à l'opposite de son inclination, comme je la voy se plonger et s'enyvrer de son vin.*

[2] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians.*

[3] See Idem, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.

given the lie or an insult, (*c*) and who is not one to accept a bad excuse as payment and satisfaction, (*b*) let him avoid the rise of contentious altercations. I shun gloomy temperaments and churlish men as I would the plague-stricken, and I do not, unless my duty compels me to do so, enter into talk which I can not carry on without personal feeling and without excitement. (*c*) *Melius non incipient quam desinent.*[1] (*b*) The safest way, consequently, is to be prepared beforehand for the occasion.

I am well aware that some wise men have taken another course, and have not feared to grapple and struggle to the utmost with many subjects. Such men are assured of their strength, by means of which they are under cover from every sort of hostile success, causing, by the vigour of their patience, their foes to do the fighting; [2]

> Velut rupes vastum quæ prodit in æquor,
> Obvia ventorum furiis expostaque ponto,
> Vim cunctam atque minas perfert cœlique marisque,
> Ipsa immota manens.[3]

Let us not undertake to follow these examples; we should never attain to them. They [4] are persistent in beholding with resolution and without perturbation the ruin of their country, which had wholly possessed and commanded their affection. For common souls there is too much effort and too much severity in this. Cato gave up the noblest life that ever was because of this. We meaner natures must fly from the storm at a distance; we must make provision of right feeling, not of endurance,[5] and evade the blows that we can not parry. (*c*) Zeno, seeing Charemonides, a young man whom he loved, coming to sit beside him, suddenly arose; and upon Cleanthes asking him why he did

[1] They will do better not to begin than to stop. — Seneca, *Epistle* 72.

[2] *Faisant luicter les maux par la vigueur de la patience.*

[3] Just as a rock that juts out into the vast sea, meeting the fury of the winds and exposed to the waves, endures all the might and the threats of the sky and the sea, itself remaining immovable. — Virgil, *Æneid*, X, 693.

[4] That is, such men.

[5] That is to say, we must provide against the feelings that may arise, not against meeting the storm.

so, "I understand," he answered, "that physicians especially prescribe rest for all swellings, and forbid excitement."[1] (*b*) Socrates does not say, "Do not surrender to the charms of beauty; face it; strive against it"; he says, "Shun it; run from the sight of it and from meeting it as from a powerful poison which shoots forth and strikes from afar."[2] He does not hope that youth can succeed in this.[3] (*c*) And his worthy disciple,[4] imagining or reciting (but to my mind rather reciting than imagining) the rare perfections of the great Cyrus, represents him as distrustful of his strength to withstand the fascination of the divine beauty of the renowned Panthea, his prisoner, and as giving over to another, who had less liberty than himself, the duty of visiting and guarding her. (*b*) And likewise the Holy Spirit says: "Lead us not into temptation." We do not pray that our reason may not be assailed and overcome by lust, but that it may not be even tried by it; that we may not be led into a condition where we have even to endure the approach, the solicitations, and temptations of sin; and we beseech our Lord to keep our conscience clear, fully and perfectly delivered from intercourse with evil.

(*c*) They who say that they are justified in their vengeful passion, or in any other sort of painful passion, often say true, as things are, but not as they were; when they speak to us, the causes of their error have been fostered and forwarded by themselves; but go further back, trace these causes to their origin; there you will take them by surprise.[5] Would they have it that their fault is the less from being older, and that the sequel of a wrong beginning can be right? (*b*) He who desires the welfare of his country, as I do, without being inflamed by passion or pining over it, will be afflicted, but not overwhelmed, to see it threatened either with its downfall or with a not less ruinous continuance. Unhappy bark, which waves, winds, and pilot drive hither and yon with such opposing impulsions!

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Zeno*.
[2] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, 3.13.
[3] This sentence was omitted in 1595.
[4] Xenophon. See the *Cyropædeia*, V, 1.2–8.
[5] *Là vous les prendrez sans vert.*

In tam diversa, magister,
Ventus et unda trahunt.[1]

He who does not eagerly seek for the favour of princes as for something which he can not do without is not much wounded by the coldness of their reception and countenance or by the inconstancy of their good-will. He who does not brood over his children or his honours with slavish engrossment[2] does not fail to live comfortably after he has lost them. He who does right chiefly for his own satisfaction is scarcely discomposed by seeing men judge his deeds not according to his deserts. A quarter of an ounce of patience suffices for such annoyances. I find myself well off with this receipt, redeeming myself at the beginning as advantageously as I can; and I feel that by means of it I have avoided many labours and difficulties. With very little effort I stay the first movement of my emotions, and forsake the subject that begins to weigh upon me before it carries me away. (*c*) He who does not stay the start does not care to stay the race;[3] he who knows not how to shut a door will not drive out those who enter in.[4] He who can not be master at the beginning will never be master at the end; nor will he who was not able to withstand the first push have the strength not to fall;[5] *etenim ipsæ se impellunt, ubi semel a ratione discessum est; ipsaque sibi imbecillitas indulget, in altumque provehitur imprudens nec reperit locum consistendi.*[6] (*b*) I am conscious betimes of the little winds that murmur and rustle within me, forerunners of the storm,

Ceu flamina prima,
Cum deprensa fremunt sylvis, et cæca volutant
Murmura, venturos nautis prodentia ventos.[7]

[1] Montaigne translates the lines before quoting them. Source unknown.

[2] *Propension tyrannique. Propension* was introduced into the language by Montaigne.

[3] See Seneca, *Epistle* 85. [4] See *Epistle* 116. [5] See *Epistle* 85.

[6] For they drive themselves on when once they have taken leave of reason, and weakness is self-indulgent and is heedlessly carried out to sea, nor does it find a place to halt. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, IV, 18.

[7] As rising blasts, pent up in a forest, roar and give forth dull rumblings that foretell to sailors the coming storm. — Virgil, *Æneid*, X, 97.

How many times have I done myself a very manifest injustice to avoid the risk of receiving a still worse one from the judges, after an age of vexations and of dirty and mean practices, more repulsive to my disposition than the rack and the stake! (*c*) *Convenit a litibus, quantum licet, et nescio an paulo plus etiam quam licet abhorrentem esse; est enim non modo liberale paululum nonnunquam de suo jure decedere, sed interdum etiam fructuosum.*[1] If we were really wise, we should be glad and boastful, as I one day heard a boy of good family very naïvely rejoicing to everybody that his mother had lost her lawsuit, as if it were her cough, or her fever, or some other thing irksome to keep. The very favours which fortune might have bestowed upon me from kinships and friendly relations with those who have sovereign authority in such matters as these, I have conscientiously taken pains to avoid making use of to the prejudice of others, so as not to set my rights above their just value. (*b*) In fine, I have effected so much by my labours (happily I can say this), that I am still undefiled by lawsuits, — which have not failed to offer themselves many times for my service on very just grounds, had I chosen to listen, — and undefiled by quarrels. I shall soon have lived a long life without having either suffered or committed any injury of moment, and without hearing myself called by a worse word than my own name;[2] a rare favour of heaven!

Our greatest commotions have absurd sources and causes. How great a disaster did our last Duke of Burgundy[3] incur from a dispute about a wagon-load of sheepskins! And the engraving on a seal — was not that the first and controlling cause of the most horrible catastrophe that this world has ever suffered?[4] For Pompeius and Cæsar are but the off-

[1] It is proper to do all that one can, and perhaps even a little more, to avoid a lawsuit; for it is not only generous, but at times even profitable, to yield a little of one's right. — Cicero, *De Off.*, II, 18.

[2] *Sans avoir ouy pis que mon nom.*

[3] The reference here is to the war in 1476 between Charles the Bold and the Swiss. Commines (V, 1) says: *Et pour quelle querelle commença cette guerre? Ce fut pour une chariot de peaux de mouton que monseigneur de Romont prit à un Suisse en passant par sa terre.*

[4] The civil war between Marius and Sylla. Plutarch (*Life of Marius*) narrates that, when Marius was on the point of obtaining possession

shoots and the sequel of the other two. And I have seen in my time the wisest heads of this kingdom assembled with great ceremony and at public expense to make treaties and agreements of which the real decision depended meanwhile, in full sovereignty, on the talk of the cabinet of ladies, and on the inclination of some little woman. (*c*) The poets well understood this when they delivered Europe and Asia over to fire and blood about an apple. (*b*) Enquire why this man ventures to risk his honour and his life on his sword and dagger; let him tell you the origin of his quarrel; he can not do so without blushing, so idle and frivolous is its cause.

At the beginning there is need only of a little advisement; but when once involved, all the strings pull. There is need of great preparation, much more difficult and important. (*c*) How much easier it is not to go in than to come out! (*b*) Now our proceeding should be the opposite of that of the reed, which produces a long, straight stalk for its first growth, but afterward, as if it had been made weary and out of breath, comes to making frequent thick knots, like pauses, which shew that it no longer has its primitive vigour and persistence.[1] It is needful rather to begin gently and calmly, and keep our breath and our vigorous efforts for the climax and the completion of the business.

We guide affairs at the outset and have them at our mercy; but later, when they are in motion, it is they that guide us and carry us along, and we have to follow them. (*c*) However, this is not to say that that reasoning has relieved me from all difficulty, and that I have not often had much ado to curb and bridle my passions. They do not always regulate themselves in proportion to the cause, and often are rough and violent even at the beginning. Nevertheless, there may be derived from this counsel good profit and fruit, save for those who in well-doing are satisfied by no fruit if renown be lacking; for in truth such mental action is of no account except for each man within himself.

of the person of Jugurtha, the latter fell by treachery into the hands of Sylla, who afterward always used a seal commemorating this, *pour faire despit à Marius*.

[1] See Plutarch, *How to learn whether one improves and benefits by the practice of virtue*.

You are more content because of it, but not more esteemed, having amended before you have entered into action, and before the matter was seen by others.

Always, also, not in this matter alone, but in all other duties of life, the path of those who aim at honour is very different from that which those follow who set before themselves order and reason. (*b*) There are those who enter the lists heedlessly and furiously, and flag in the course. Plutarch says that they who, through the weakness of false shame, are yielding and ready to grant whatever is asked of them, are ready later to fail in their word and to retract it;[1] and in like manner he who lightly enters into a quarrel is likely to abandon it as lightly. The same obstacle that keeps me from beginning it would incite me to hold to it strongly when I was once set in motion and heated. It is a bad business; since you are involved in it, you must go on or be shamefully killed. (*c*) "Be deliberate in undertaking, but ardent in pursuit," said Bias;[2] (*b*) for lack of wisdom we fall into a lack of courage which is even less tolerable.

In these days most accommodations of our quarrels are shameful and deceptive; we seek only to save appearances, and meanwhile we are false to our real purposes and disavow them. We salve over the facts; we know how we said it, and in what sense, and the bystanders know, and our friends, whom we have desired to make aware of our superiority. It is at the expense of our frankness and of the honour of our courage that we disavow our thought and seek hiding-places in mendacity, in order to come to an agreement. We belie ourselves, to justify having given the lie to another. Whether your conduct or your words may bear another interpretation is not to be considered; it is the honest and sincere interpretation of them that you must now maintain, whatever it may cost you. Your courage and your conscience are addressed; these are not qualities to be masked; let us leave such base methods and such expedients to the pettifogging of the courts. The excuses and reparations which I hear made every day, to do away with indiscretion, seem to me more improper than the in-

[1] See Plutarch, *Of False Shame.*
[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Bias.*

discretion itself. It would be better to offend one opponent yet again than to offend oneself by making him such amends. You have defied him when heated with anger, and you set about appeasing and flattering him in your cool and better senses; thus you draw back [1] further than you had advanced. I find nothing that a gentleman can say so faulty in him as recantation seems to me to be disgraceful to him, when it is a recantation extorted from him by authority; inasmuch as stubbornness is more excusable in him than pusillanimity. Passions are as easy for me to avoid as they are difficult to moderate. (*c*) *Abscinduntur facilius animo quam temperantur.*[2] (*b*) Let him who can not attain to the noble Stoic impassibility take refuge in the bosom of this commonplace insensibility of mine. That which they [3] did through virtue, I am led to do by temperament. The middle region harbours storms; [4] the two extremes — philosophers and rustics — compete in tranquillity and in happiness.

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas
Atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum
Subjecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis avari!
Fortunatus et ille deos qui novit agrestes,
Panaque, Sylvanumque senem, Nymphasque sorores! [5]

All things are weak and delicate at birth. Consequently, we must at the beginning have our eyes open; for if then, when the thing is small, we do not discover the danger from it, when that has increased we can no longer discover the remedy for it. I should have encountered every day, in the path of ambition, a million crosses more difficult to put up with than it has been difficult for me to check the natural inclination that led me thither;

[1] *Vous vous soubmettez.*

[2] They are more easily rooted out of the mind than moderated. — Source unknown.

[3] The Stoics.

[4] Cf. Book I, chap. 54 (Vol. II, p. 18): "The simple peasants," etc.

[5] Fortunate was he who could learn the causes of things, and tread under foot all fears and belief in inexorable destiny, and the din of greedy Acheron! Fortunate, too, who knows the rustic gods, and Pan and old Silvanus and the sister Nymphs! — Virgil, *Georgics*, II, 490.

Jure perhorrui
Late conspicuum tollere verticem.[1]

All public actions are open to uncertain and differing interpretations, for too many heads pass judgement on them. Some say of my municipal employment [2] (and I am glad to speak of it a little — not that it is worth it, but as serving to shew my way of thinking in such matters) that I bore myself therein like a man who bestirs himself too sluggishly and with a languid interest; and they are not very far from what was visible. I endeavour to keep my mind and my thoughts in quietude; (*c*) *cum semper natura, tum etiam ætate jam quietus;* [3] (*b*) and if sometimes they are excited [4] by some violent and penetrating impression, it is, in all honesty, without my consent. From this natural indolence of mine, however, there must not be drawn any inference of weakness (for lack of attention and lack of understanding are two things), and still less of unthankfulness and of ingratitude to those citizens who employed the utmost means that they had in their hands to oblige me, both before they knew me and after; and did much more for me in giving me my office a second time than in giving it to me at first. I wish them all possible good; and surely, if occasion had offered, I would have spared nothing for their service. I bestirred myself for them as I do for myself. They are excellent people, warlike and high-spirited, yet capable of obedience and discipline, and of serving some good purpose if they are well guided therein.

They say also that my administration passed without mark or trace. That is well! They blame my abstinence from action in days when almost all men were convicted of doing too much. I am eager in action [5] where my will carries me; but this vivacity is inimical to perseverance. Whoever shall desire to make use of me in my own way, let him give me matters in which there is need of vigour and free-

[1] I have justly feared to raise my head so as to be conspicuous at a distance. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 16.18.

[2] As mayor of Bordeaux.

[3] Always calm by nature, and now by reason of old age as well. — Quintus Cicero, *De Petitione Consulatus*, II.

[4] *Si elles se desbauchent par fois.* [5] *J'ay un agir trepignant.*

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dom of action, which may be handled straightforwardly and directly, but which are at the same time hazardous, and I shall be able to do something about them; if the handling must be lengthy, crafty, laborious, skilful and tortuous, he will do better to address himself to some one else.

Not all important commissions are difficult. I was prepared to busy myself a little more vigorously had there been need of this; for it is in my power to do more than I do or than I like to do. I did not leave undone, so far as I know, any thing which duty actually demanded of me; I readily forgot those things which ambition commingles with duty and covers with her name. They are the ones which oftenest fill the eyes and the ears, and content men. Not the thing but the semblance satisfies them. If they hear no noise it seems to them that every one is asleep. My temperament is inconsistent with loud emotions. I could easily check a disturbance without being disturbed, and I could punish an uproar without mental trouble. Am I in need of angry excitement — I borrow it and wear it as a mask. My deportment is inert, rather dull than sharp. I do not blame a magistrate who sleeps, provided that they who are at his orders sleep at the same time; and the laws likewise sleep. As for me, I commend a smoothly gliding, shadowed, and silent life; (*c*) *neque submissam et abjectam, neque se efferentem;*[1] (*b*) my fortune so wills it. I was born of a family that slipped along without show and noiselessly, and ever and always aiming especially at integrity.

In these days men are so fashioned to commotion and ostentation that kindness, moderation, equability, stability, and other such quiet and obscure qualities are no longer known. Rough bodies make themselves felt, smooth ones are handled without perception. Sickness makes itself felt; health, little or not at all; nor do the things that soothe us compared with those that sting us.[2] It is acting for the

[1] Not submissive and abject, and yet not haughty. — Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 34.

[2] *Ny les choses qui nous oignent, au prix de celles qui nous poignent.* "Montaigne," says M. Villey, "doubtless recalled, in connection with the play upon the words *oignent* and *poignent*, the popular couplet:

Oignez vilain, il vous poindra;
Poignez vilain, il vous oindra."

sake of one's reputation and private profit, not for the common good, to wait to do in the market-place what might be done in the council chamber, and till high noon what might have been done the night before; and to be eager to do oneself what one's associate does as well. So did some surgeons in Greece perform the acts of their profession on platforms, in sight of the passers-by, in order to acquire more practice and more custom.[1] Men think that good laws are to be hearkened to only when trumpeted abroad. Ambition is not a vice for petty souls and for such powers as ours. Some one said to Alexander: "Your father will leave a vast empire at ease and at peace." The youth was envious of his father's victories and of the justice of his rule. He would not have desired to enjoy command of the world lazily and peacefully.[2] (*c*) Alcibiades, in Plato, would prefer to die, young, handsome, rich, noble, learned, all of which he was in high degree, rather than not to advance beyond the state of that condition.[3] (*b*) This infirmity is perchance excusable in so strong and so large a soul. When these dwarfed and paltry little intelligences deceive themselves and think to spread abroad their name by having judged a cause justly or been on guard at a city-gate, they the more shew their hind-sides where they hope to exalt their heads. Such trivial well-doing has neither body nor life; it vanishes in the first mouth, and passes only from one street corner to another. Talk boldly of it to your son and your servant, like the man of old who, having no other auditor of his self-praise and witness of his valour, boasted to his housemaid, exclaiming: "O Perrette, what a brave and able man thou hast for a master!" [4] Talk of it to yourselves at the worst; as a councillor of my acquaintance, after disgorging a mass of paragraphs of extreme quarrelsomeness and equal folly, having withdrawn from the council chamber to the closet, was heard mumbling between his teeth most conscientiously: *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam.*[5]

[1] See Plutarch, *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend.*

[2] See Idem, *Life of Alexander.* [3] See Plato, *First Alcibiades.*

[4] See Plutarch, *How to learn whether one improves and benefits by the practice of virtue.*

[5] Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory. — *Psalm* CXV, 1.

He who can not pay himself elsewise does it from his own purse. Fame does not prostitute itself so cheaply. The rare and exemplary actions to which it is due would not endure the companionship of this innumerable multitude of trivial every-day actions. Marble may exalt you as you choose for having repaired a piece of wall or cleansed a public ditch, but not men of sense. All goodness is not followed by renown if difficulty and strangeness be not connected with it; nor, indeed, is bare esteem due to every action that is virtuous, according to the Stoics;[1] and they will not that we should even think well of the man who, from temperance, abstained from a blear-eyed old woman. (*c*) They who have recognised the admirable qualities of Scipio Africanus deny him the honour which Panætius attributes to him of having been abstinent from gifts, as an honour not so much his as belonging to his time.[2]

(*b*) We have the pleasures adapted to our lot; let us not encroach upon those of grandeur. Ours are more natural, and the humbler they are, the more solid and sure. If it be not from conscience, let us at least from ambition reject ambition; let us disdain this base and importunate hunger for renown and honour which impels us to beg for it from every sort of people (*c*) (*quæ est ista laus quæ possit e macello peti?*)[3] (*b*) by despicable methods and at any price, however degrading; it is dishonour to be thus honoured. Let us learn to covet no more glory than we are capable of attaining. To puff oneself up over every useful and innocent action is for those to whom such action is extraordinary and rare; they value it at the price that it cost them. In proportion as a good deed is more striking, I abate its goodness by the suspicion that I conceive, that it was done more because it was striking than because it was good; displayed, it is half sold. Those actions have much more charm which escape carelessly and noiselessly from the hands of him who does them, and which, later, some worthy man selects for their own sake and lifts out of shadow to push them forward

[1] See Plutarch, *Common conceptions against the Stoics.*

[2] See Cicero, *De Off.*, II, 22.

[3] What sort of renown can be won in the shambles? — Idem, *De Fin.*, II, 15.

into light. (*c*) *Mihi quidem laudabiliora videntur omnia quæ sine venditatione et sine populo teste fiunt*,[1] says the most vain-glorious man who ever lived.

(*b*) I had only to preserve things as they were and to make them last,[2] which are hidden and imperceptible processes. Innovation makes a great display, but it is forbidden in these times, when we are harassed and can prohibit to ourselves only what is new. (*c*) To abstain from doing is often as magnanimous as to do, but it is less visible, and the little I am worth is almost all of that sort.

(*b*) In short, the opportunities in this office of mine were in harmony with my nature, for which I owe them very many thanks. Is there any one who wishes to be sick in order to give work to his physician? And should not the physician be thrashed who should wish us to have the plague that he might exercise his skill? I never had that iniquitous and common-enough disposition to desire that the confusion and evil plight of the affairs of that city should enhance the honour of my government; I heartily lent my aid toward their being easy and facile. He who does not choose to be grateful to me for the good order, the sweet and silent tranquillity, which accompanied my guidance can not at least deprive me of the share therein which belongs to me under the name of my good-fortune. And I am so made that I love as well to be lucky as to be wise, and to owe my successes solely to the grace of God as to owe them to the medium of what I effected. I had proclaimed to the world eloquently enough my incapacity in such public matters; I have something worse than incapacity: it is that this scarcely displeases me, and that I scarcely attempt to cure it, considering the course of life I have planned. Neither did I satisfy myself in this employment, but I almost attained in it what I had promised myself about it; and truly I much surpassed what I had promised about it to those with whom I had to do; for I usually promise a little less than I can do and than I hope to have in my power. I feel assured that I left behind me no resentment or hatred; as for leaving

[1] All things seem to me the more commendable when they are done without ostentation and without witnesses. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, II, 26.

[2] *Je n'avois qu'à conserver et durer.*

regret and desire for me, I know at least this, that I have not greatly wished to do so.

> Mene huic confidere monstro!
> Mene salis placidi vultum fluctusque quietos
> Ignorare.[1]

CHAPTER XI

OF CRIPPLES

In the preceding Essay, Montaigne has said how much the reform in the calendar (which, in France, went into effect in 1582, when they passed at once from the 9th to the 20th of December) bothered him. Here he recurs to it, to contemplate it from his familiar point of view, the uncertainty of human "reason."

The thought on the next page, that men, with regard to the facts set before them, occupy themselves more readily in seeking the reason than the truth of them, is the opening of the most definite argument for doubt that occurs in the Essays. Elsewhere we have seen Montaigne apparently curiously credulous; here the scales decidedly dip on the other side; and, as Voltaire said: "The man who would learn to doubt should read this Essay." He will learn here how to doubt wisely, intelligently, calmly, contentedly, with no touch of the spirit of the scoffer. He will learn the reasonable sources of doubt — its rightful causes — as derived from the conditions of human nature.

M. Villey has well stated Montaigne's own attitude: "When he comes forth from doubt, and he comes forth very resolutely, it is alone the authority of the fact that obliges his reason to accept it. Whenever he can clearly mark the meaning of facts, he comes to a decision; and he remains in doubt in all cases where the facts do not seem to him to dictate an answer. The Essay 'Of Cripples' has much significance from this point of view."

The passage beginning "I myself" is a convincing proof of the slight dependence to be put on human testimony, on the expressions of opinion. It is questionable whether Montaigne is not lacking in sound judgement in what he says on the next page: "For my part what I should not believe when asserted by one man, I should not believe if asserted by a hundred." Cumulative testimony is surely different, not merely in *degree* but in *kind*, from a solitary testimony. Like a composite photograph, it proves the facts that the independent assertions testify to.

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[1] That I should trust this monster! That I should be unaware of the treachery of this placid sea and the tranquil waves! — Virgil, *Æneid*, V, 849, 848. Montaigne has inverted the order of the lines, and omitted *jubes* after *ignorare*.

This Essay indicates, as can be constantly observed in Montaigne's pages, how much interested he was by "miracles," by the inexplicable; he tells countless stories of "such matters," for the truth of which he vouches as little as he seeks for the cause. His verdict was: "The Court understands nothing of this"; but it is evident that the pleadings entertained him. And it may have been, it seems to me, because he in some measure foresaw, as Bacon foresaw, that some of these wonders would be explained, not denied, by the clear-sightedness of coming science.

A propos, ou hors de propos, of this question of beliefs, of opinions, — of their grounds, — he comes to beliefs about cripples, and from this paragraph the Essay received its irrelevant name.

IT is two or three years since in France the year was shortened by ten days. How many changes must follow this reform! It was really to move heaven and earth at once; nevertheless, nothing is thrown out of place: my neighbours find the time for sowing, for reaping, opportuneness for their business, and lucky and unlucky days, at exactly the same dates which had been assigned to them from time immemorial; nor had error been perceptible in our habits, nor is there now perceptible improvement in them, so much uncertainty is there everywhere, so stupid and dull is our perception. It is said that this adjustment might have been managed in a less inconvenient way by following the example of Augustus and dropping for some years the bissextile day,[1] which in one way and another is a day of embarrassment and confusion, until what was lacking had been supplied; [2] which has not been done even by this correction, for we remain still several days in arrears; indeed, by this same means we could provide for the future, decreeing that after the lapse of such or such a number of years this extra day should disappear forever; our miscalculation could not thereafter exceed twenty-four hours. We have no other count of time than by years; for many centuries the world has made use of this; nevertheless it is a measurement of which we have not yet decided the extent; [3] and it is of such nature that we daily question what forms other nations have diversely given to it and what custom about it has been. Suppose that, as some say, the heavens,

[1] The extra day in leap year.

[2] *Jusques à ce qu'on fust arrivé à satisfaire exactement ce debte.*

[3] *Que nous n'avons encore achevé d'arrester.*

as they grow old, are drawn nearer to us and throw us into uncertainty even of the hours and the days; and consider what Plutarch says about the months — that even in his time astrology [1] had not yet learned how to determine the movements of the moon. Well fitted are we to know the dates of past things!

I was pondering just now, as I often do, on the thought, what a free and roving agent the human reason is. I see that commonly men more readily occupy themselves in seeking the causes of facts laid before them than in seeking whether they be true. They disregard the antecedents, but carefully examine the consequences. (*c*) Ridiculous chatterers! The knowledge of causes concerns only him who has the guidance of things, not us who have only passive receptivity of them, and who have the perfectly full and complete use of them according to our need, without penetrating into their origin and essence; wine is none the more agreeable to him who knows its primal properties. On the contrary, both the body and the soul interrupt and modify the right that they possess to the use of the world and of themselves by mingling therewith the idea of knowledge; the results concern us, but the means not at all; to pronounce authoritatively and to apportion belong to mastership and authority, as it is the part of deference and ignorance [2] to accept this.

Let us consider again our custom. (*b*) Usually people begin thus: "How is it that this has happened?" They should say: "But has it happened?" Our imagination is capable of filling out a hundred other worlds and discovering their origins and contexture. It has need neither of substance nor of foundation; if it has its way, it builds as well on vacuity as on plenitude,[3] and with nothingness as with substance, —

Dare corpus idonea fumo.[4]

I find that almost everywhere it is needful to say, "There is nothing in this";[5] and I should often employ this refutation;

[1] That is, astronomy. See Plutarch, *Roman Questions*.

[2] *Subjection et apprentissage.* [3] *Sur le vuide que sur le plain.*

[4] Able to give weight to smoke. — Persius V, 20. The original has *pondus* instead of *corpus*.

[5] *Il n'en est rien.*

but I dare not, for they cry out that it is an evasion resulting from weakness of understanding and ignorance; and I must needs commonly play tricks for company's sake in dealing with trivial matters and tales that I entirely disbelieve; besides that, in truth, it is a little churlish and captious to deny curtly a statement of fact; and few persons fail — notably as to a matter difficult of belief — to affirm that they saw it, or to allege witnesses whose authority checks our contradiction. In conformity with this custom, we know the foundations and the conditions of a thousand things that never existed, and the world bickers over a thousand questions of which both sides are equally false. (*c*) *Ita finitima sunt falsa veris ut in præcipitem locum non debeat se sapiens committere.*[1]

(*b*) Truth and falsehood have like aspects: similar bearing, style, and proceedings; we regard them in the same way. I find not only that we are remiss in defending ourselves from deception, but that we seek and desire to fall into its power; we like, as conformable to our being, to confuse our minds with what is of no value.

I have seen the birth of many miracles in my day. Although they are smothered as soon as born, we do not fail to have a vision of the course they would have run if they had lived to maturity; for if only the end of the thread is found, you can wind off as much as you choose; and it is further from nothing to the smallest thing in the world than it is from that to the greatest. Now the first who are imbued with this beginning of strange things,[2] when they come to scatter abroad their story, find, from the opposition they encounter, where the difficulty of persuasion lies and proceed to stop up that crack with some false patch; (*c*) besides that, *insita hominibus libidine alendi de industria rumores*,[3] we naturally make it a matter of conscience not to give back what has been lent us without some interest and some addition from our store. The private error first creates the

[1] The false is so near the true that a wise man ought not to venture on a precipitous spot. — Cicero, *Academica*, II, 21.

[2] That is, with miracles.

[3] Men having a natural desire diligently to spread rumours. — Livy, XXVIII, 24.

public error, and in its turn the public error afterward creates the private error.[1] (*b*) Thus the whole structure goes on being built up and shaped from hand to hand, so that the most distant witness knows more fully about it than the nearest, and the last informed is more fully persuaded than the first. It is a natural progression; for whosoever believes a thing thinks it a charitable deed to persuade another of its truth, and, to do this, he does not hesitate to add as much of his own invention to his story as he sees to be necessary to make up for the opposition and deficiency which he thinks exist in other men's conceptions. I myself, who am peculiarly scrupulous about lying,[2] and who care but little to give credibility and authority to what I say, none the less perceive about the gossip I take in hand that, being heated (*c*) either by the opposition of another or by the very warmth of my narration, (*b*) I magnify and inflate my theme by voice and gestures, by energy and force of language, and also by extension and amplification, not without detriment to the simple truth; but yet I do so on these terms, that for the first man who brings me to myself and asks from me the bare and plain truth I immediately abandon my overstraining, and give it to him without exaggeration, without emphasis and amplification. (*c*) An eager and vehement way of talking, as mine is commonly, is easily carried into hyperbole.

(*b*) There is nothing upon which men are more usually bent than to make way for their opinions; where ordinary means fail us, we add to them command, force, fire, and sword. It is unfortunate to be at such a pass that the best test of truth is the multitude of believers in a crowd in which fools so largely outnumber wise men. (*c*) *Quasi vero quidquam sit tam valde quam nil sapere vulgare.*[3] *Sanitatis patrocinium est insanientium turba.*[4] (*b*) It is difficult to

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 81.29.

[2] Cf. Book I, chap. 9 (Vol. I, p. 44): "In truth, lying is an accursed vice"; and Book II, chap. 17 (Vol. III, p. 57): "My soul, by its nature, shuns falsehood, and hates even to think a falsehood."

[3] As if any thing were so exceedingly common as folly. — Cicero, *De Divin.*, II, 39.

[4] The multitude of the insane is the safeguard of the wise. — St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, VI, 10.

determine one's judgement against generally held opinion. The first conviction, derived from the subject itself, takes possession of simple minds; from them it spreads to the intelligent under the authority of the number and length of life of the testimonies. For my part, what I would not believe one man about, I would not believe a hundred ones about, and I do not judge of opinions by their long-standing.

A short time ago, one of our princes, in whom gout had ruined a fine nature and a cheerful temperament, allowed himself to be so strongly convinced by reports of the marvellous works of a priest, who, by means of words and gestures, cured all diseases, that he made a long journey to seek him, and by the power of his imagination[1] his legs were affected and quieted for a few hours, so that he obtained from them the service which they had long forgotten how to give him. If chance had allowed five or six similar happenings to accumulate, it had been enough to place this miracle among things belonging to nature. There was found afterward so much simpleness and so little art in the builder-up of such results,[2] that he was judged undeserving of any punishment; as indeed would be the case with most such matters, were their home discovered.[3] (*c*) *Miramur ex intervallo fallentia.*[4] (*b*) Our vision often thus represents to us strange shapes at a distance, which vanish as we approach them: *nunquam ad liquidum fama perducitur.*[5]

It is a wonder from what idle beginnings and trivial causes such much-talked-of beliefs are usually born. That fact itself hinders information about them; for whilst we seek causes and ends worthy of such great fame, we miss the real ones; they escape our sight by reason of their smallness; and in truth there is needed for such investigations a very prudent, careful, and acute enquirer, impartial and unprejudiced. To this hour all these miracles and strange events have hidden themselves from me. I have seen no monster or miracle on earth more evident than my-

[1] *Apprehension.* [2] *En l'architecte de tels ouvrages.*
[3] *Qui les reconnoistroit en leur giste.*
[4] We wonder at things that deceive us by their distance. — Seneca, *Epistle* 118.
[5] Never is rumour reduced to certainty. — Quintus Curtius, IX, 2.

self; we become wonted to all strangeness by habit and time; but the more familiar I am with myself and the better I know myself, the more my misshapenness astonishes me, and the less do I comprehend myself.

The special privilege of bringing forward and producing such incidents is reserved for fortune. As I was passing day before yesterday through a village two leagues from my house, I found the place all excitement about a miracle which had just failed there, by which the neighbourhood had been deceived for many months; and the neighbouring provinces were beginning to be aroused about it and to flock thither in great crowds of all ranks. A young man of the village had one night, in his house, in sport, counterfeited the voice of a spirit, without thought of other purpose than to enjoy a moment's fooling. As it succeeded a little better than he had hoped, in order to carry his joke to greater length he made an associate of a young village girl utterly stupid and simple; and later there were three of them, of like age and intelligence; and from domestic preachings they proceeded to public preachings, concealing themselves behind the altar of the church, speaking only at night, and forbidding any light to be brought. From words which aimed at the conversion of souls, and threats of the day of judgement, — for these are subjects under whose authority and reverence imposture most easily stoops for shelter, — they passed on to certain chimeras and actions so silly and so absurd that there is hardly any thing so clumsy in the sports of little children. Yet, if fortune had chosen to favour it a little, who knows how greatly that juggling might have increased! Those poor devils are now in prison and will probably pay the penalty for the universal folly; and I dare say some judge will avenge himself upon them for his own share.

In this case, which has been laid bare, we see clearly; but in many matters of the same nature, which go beyond our knowledge, I am of the opinion that we should suspend our judgement as well in rejecting as in accepting them. Many illusions in the world are engendered, (*c*) or, to speak more boldly, all the illusions in the world are engendered, (*b*) by the fact that we are taught to be afraid of confessing our

ignorance (*c*) and are constrained to admit whatever we can not refute. (*b*) We speak of every thing as by mandate and predetermination. The practice at Rome was that even what a witness deposed he had seen with his own eyes, and what a judge decreed from his own certain knowledge, were expressed in this form: "It seems to me."[1] I am led to distrust things that are probable when they are set before me as infallibly true. I like those phrases which soften and moderate the extravagance of our assertions: "Perhaps," "In some measure," "Some," "They say," "I think," and the like; and if I had had to train children I should have put so often in their mouths this sort of response, enquiring, not assertive: "What does it mean?" "I don't understand," "It might be," "Is it true?" that they would have retained at sixty years the air of learners, rather than, at ten years, resemble instructors as they do. He who would be cured of ignorance must needs confess it. (*c*) Iris is the daughter of Thaumantis. Wonder is the basis of all philosophy, inquisition the progress, ignorance the end.[2] (*b*) In very truth there is a certain sturdy and valiant ignorance which is in no wise inferior in honour and courage to knowledge; (*c*) an ignorance which to beget needs no less knowledge than to beget knowledge.

(*b*) I read in my youth a report which Corras, councillor at Toulouse, had printed of an extraordinary incident of two men, each of whom represented himself to be the other.[3] I remember (and I do not remember any thing else about it) that he seemed to me to have made out the imposture of him whom he adjudged guilty to be so wonderful and so beyond our experience and his who was the judge, that I thought that there was much rashness in the sentence which condemned him to be hanged.[4] Let us accept some form of sentence which declares: "The Court understands nothing of this," more freely and openly than did the Areopa-

[1] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 47.

[2] See Plato, *Theætetus*. Iris, as the messenger of the gods, represents the highest knowledge, that is, philosophy. Thaumas (not Thaumantis) is wonder.

[3] The report was printed in 1560.

[4] Montaigne refers to the *cause célèbre* of the false Martin Guerre, which the elder Dumas introduced in his story of *The Two Dianas*.

gites, who, finding themselves in difficulty about a cause which they could not clear up, ordered that the parties should return a hundred years later.[1]

The witches of my neighbourhood are in danger of their lives upon the report of every new authority who gives body to their dreams. To adapt the examples that Holy Writ gives us of such things — very certain and irrefragable examples — and to connect them with our modern incidents, when we perceive neither the causes nor the ground of these, requires a different intelligence from ours; it belongs peradventure to that sole most potent witness to tell us: "This has true life,[2] and that, and not this other." God is to be believed — that is, in very truth, altogether reasonable; but not, however, one of ourselves who is astounded by his own tale (and necessarily astounded by it he is, if he be not out of his senses), whether his astonishment be excited by another's, or whether he feels it about his own.[3]

I am dull and hold a little to what is substantial and probable, avoiding the old-time reproofs: *Majorem fidem homines adhibent iis quæ non intelligunt.*[4] *Cupidine humani ingenii libentius obscura creduntur.*[5] I see well that this is a challenge;[6] and I am forbidden to feel doubt on pain of damnable insults — a strange way of persuasion. Thanks be to God, my belief is not controlled by fisticuffs! Let them be angry with those who accuse their belief of being false; I accuse it only of difficulty and rashness, and condemn the contrary affirmation as much as they do, if not so imperiously. He who establishes his argument by defiance and by command shews that his reasoning is weak. In a verbal and scholastic discussion, they may make as fair a show as their opponents, — (*c*) *videantur sane, non affir-*

[1] See Valerius Maximus, VIII, 1, *ext.* 2; Aulus Gellius, XII, 7.

[2] *Cettuy-cy en est.*

[3] *Soit qu'il l'employe au faict d'autruy, soit qu'il l'employe contre soy-mesme.*

[4] Men put more faith in what they do not understand. — Source unknown.

[5] From a natural desire of the human mind, obscure things are most willingly believed. — Tacitus, *History*, I, 22.

[6] *Je vois bien qu'on se courrouce.*

mentur modo,[1] — (*b*) but in the effective consequences they derive from it these latter have much the advantage. To kill, there is need of a luminous and honest clearness; and our life is too real and vital to warrant these supernatural and chimerical chances. As for drugs and poisons, I leave them out of my reckoning; they who use them are murderers and of the worst kind; yet even in this matter it is said that we must not always rely on the confession of such persons, for they have been known sometimes to accuse themselves of killing persons who were found to be living and in health.

In respect to these other extravagant accusations, I should readily say that it is quite enough that a man, however greatly he is esteemed, be believed about what belongs to human nature; about what is beyond his apprehension and is of supernatural manifestation he should be believed only when sanctioned by a supernatural confirmation. This privilege, which it has pleased God to bestow upon some of the things testified to, should not be debased and lightly imparted. I am deafened with a thousand stories like this: "Three men saw him on such a day in the east; three saw him the next day in the west, at such an hour, in such a place, dressed thus and so." Truly, I would not believe myself about this. How much more natural and probable it seems to me that two men lie than that a man should go with the winds, in twelve hours, from east to west! How much more natural that our understanding should be pushed out of place by the agitation of our distraught mind than that one of us, in flesh and blood, should be whisked up on a broomstick through his chimney by an unknown spirit! Let us, who are constantly disturbed by our own internal delusions, not seek delusions from without and incomprehensible. It seems to me that we may be pardoned for not believing a marvel, in so far at least as we can turn it aside and cut off its verification in a way not marvellous; and I follow the opinion of St. Augustine,[2] that it is better to lean toward doubt than toward assurance in matters that are difficult of proof and dangerous of belief.

[1] Let them be put forward as opinions, but not asserted. — Cicero, *Academica*, II, 27.

[2] See *De Civ. Dei*, XIX, 18.

Some years ago I passed through the territory of a sovereign prince who, as a courtesy and to abate my incredulity, did me the favour to let me see, in his presence and in private, ten or twelve prisoners of this sort, and amongst them an old woman, a true witch in ugliness and deformity, very famous and of great influence for many years in that profession. I heard both testimony and free confessions, and saw I know not what painless mark upon that wretched old woman; and I investigated and talked my fill, giving to this matter the soundest attention I could — and I am not a man who allows his judgement to be strangled by prejudice. In the end, and in all conscience, I should have decreed for them hellebore rather than hemlock. *(c) Captique res magis mentibus quam conscleratis similis visa.*[1] *(b)* Justice has its own proper way of treating such maladies.

As for the contradictory opinions and arguments which worthy men have placed before me, both there and often elsewhere, I have not heard any that hold me, or that do not admit of a solution always more probable than their conclusions. To be sure, it is true that those testimonies and arguments which are based *(c)* on experience and *(b)* on fact, those I do not unravel — indeed, they have no end to take hold of; I often cut them as Alexander cut his knot. After all, it is placing a very high value on one's conjectures to cause a man to be burned alive because of them. *(c)* We are told of divers instances resembling what Prestantius says of his father, that, having fallen into a slumber much more profound than a sound sleep, he imagined that he was a mare and served the soldiers as a sumpter beast; and what he imagined, he was.[2] If what witches dream be thus materialised, if dreams can sometimes be thus embodied in facts, still I do not believe that our imagination is therefore in the keeping of men's justice.[3] *(b)* This I say as one who is neither a judge nor a counsellor of kings, and who deems himself very far from worthy to be so, but as a man of the common sort, born and devoted to

[1] The case seemed more like a deranged mind than a criminal one. — Livy, VIII, 18.

[2] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XVIII, 18.

[3] *Que nostre volonté en fust tenue à la justice.*

obedience to public welfare, both by his deeds and by his words. He who should make account of my idle fancies to the prejudice of the pettiest law, or belief, or custom of his village, would greatly wrong himself, and me not less. (*c*) For in what I say I warrant no assurance other than that it is what at that time I had in my thought — a disorderly and vacillating thought. I speak of every thing as matter for talk, and of nothing as matter for advice;[1] *nec me pudet ut istos fateri nescire quod nesciam.*[2] (*b*) I should not be so bold in speaking if I claimed to be believed, and this was what I answered a great man who complained of the severity and contentiousness of my counsels. "Because you feel your mind bent and prepared in one direction, I put before you the other, with all the care I can, to enlighten your judgement, not to compel it. God guides the thoughts of your heart and will provide your choice. I am not so presumptuous as to desire even that my opinions should be impelling in a matter of such importance; my fortune has not prepared them for such potent and high decisions." In truth, I have not only a great number of traits,[3] but also many opinions which I should be willing that my son, if I had one, should dislike. What if the most truthful opinions be not always the most advantageous for man, whose composition is so irregular!

A propos, ou hors de propos, il n'importe, on dict en Italie en commun proverbe, que celuy-là ne cognoit pas Venus en sa parfaicte douceur qui n'a couché avec la boiteuse. La fortune ou quelque particulier accident ont mis il y a long temps ce mot en la bouche du peuple, et se dit des masles comme des femelles; car la royne des Amazones respondit au Scyte qui la convioit à l'amour: Ἄριστα χωλὸς οἰφεῖ — le boiteux le faict le mieux. En cette republique feminine, pour fuir la domination des masles, elles les stropioient des l'enfance, bras, jambes, et autres membres qui leur donnoient avantage sur elles, et se servoient d'eux à ce seule-

[1] *C'est par maniere de devis que je parle de tout, et de rien par maniere d'advis.*

[2] Nor am I ashamed, as they are, to confess that I do not know what I do not know. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 25.

[3] *Des complexions.*

ment à quoy nous nous servons d'elles par deçà. J'eusse dict que le mouvement detraqué de la boiteuse apportast quelque nouveau plaisir à la besongne et quelque pointe de douceur à ceux qui l'essayent; mais je viens d'apprendre que mesme la philosophie ancienne en a decidé:[1] elle dict que les jambes et cuisses des boiteuses ne recevant, à cause de leur imperfection, l'aliment qui leur est deu, il en advient que les parties genitales qui sont au dessus sont plus plaines, plus nourries et vigoureuses; ou bien que, ce defaut empeschant l'exercice, ceux qui en sont entachez dissipent moins leurs forces et en viennent plus entiers aux jeux de Venus; qui est aussi la raison pourquoy les Grecs descrioient les tisserandes d'estre plus chaudes que les autres femmes, à cause du mestier sedentaire qu'elles font, sans grand exercice du corps. Dequoy ne pouvons-nous raisonner à ce prix là? De celles ici je pourrois aussi dire que ce tremoussement, que leur ouvrage leur donne ainsin assises, les esveille et sollicite, comme faict les dames le crolement et tremblement de leurs coches.

Do not these examples confirm what I said at the beginning, that our reasonings often anticipate the fact and that the extent of their jurisdiction is so boundless that they pass judgement and exert themselves in vacuity itself and about non-existent things? Besides the flexibility of our invention in devising explanations of all sorts of dreams, our imagination is equally ready to receive false impressions from very frivolous tokens; car, par la seule authorité de l'usage ancien et publique de ce mot, je me suis autresfois faict à croire avoir receu plus de plaisir d'une femme de ce qu'elle n'estoit pas droicte, et mis cela au compte de ses graces.

Torquato Tasso, in the comparison that he makes of Italy and France, says that he noticed this: that our legs are more slender than those of Italian gentlemen; and he attributes the cause to our being constantly on horseback;[2] which is the very thing from which Suetonius draws a wholly different conclusion; for he says, on the contrary, that Germanicus had increased the size of his legs by con-

[1] See Aristotle, *Problems*, X, problem 26.
[2] See Tasso, *Paragon dell' Italia alla Francia*.

stant use of the same exercise.[1] There is nothing so pliant and vagrant as our understanding; it is like the shoe of Theramenes, fitted for both feet;[2] whilst it is two-fold and various, subject-matters likewise are two-fold and various. "Give me a drachma of silver," said a cynic philosopher to Antigonus. "That is not the present of a king," he answered. "Give me then a talent." "That is not the present for a cynic."[3]

> Seu plures calor ille vias et cæca relaxat
> Spiramenta, novas veniat qua succus in herbas;
> Seu durat magis, et venas astringit hiantes,
> Ne tenues pluviæ, rapidive potentia solis
> Acrior, aut Boreæ penetrabile frigus adurat.[4]

Ogni medaglia ha il suo riverso.[5] That is why Clitomachus said of old that Carneades had outdone the labours of Hercules because he had eradicated from men acquiescence, that is, false opinions and rashness in judging.[6] This so vigorous conceit of Carneades sprang in my opinion from the impudence of those who in old days made profession of knowledge, and from their immoderate presumption. Æsop was put up for sale, with two other slaves. The buyer enquired of the first of these what he knew how to do; and he, to make himself valued, promised wonders[7] — that he knew this and that; the second answered as much or more for himself. When it came Æsop's turn, and he also was asked what he knew how to do, "Nothing," he said, "for these others have taken possession of every thing; they know every thing." Thus has it come about in the school of philosophy: the arrogance of those who attributed to the

[1] See Suetonius, *Life of Caligula*.

[2] See Plutarch, *Political Precepts;* Erasmus, *Adages* (*cothurno versatilior*).

[3] See Plutarch, *Of False Shame;* Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, II, 17.

[4] Whether the heat opens many passages and hidden pores, by which the moisture may come into the young plants, or hardens the ground and contracts the gaping channels, so that fine rains may not injure it, or the keen power of the fierce-burning sun or the piercing cold of Boreas blast it. — Virgil, *Georgics*, I, 89.

[5] Every medallion has its reverse side. — Italian proverb.

[6] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 34.

[7] *Monts et merveilles*.

human mind capacity for all things gave occasion in others, from disdain and opposition, to the opinion that it is capable of nothing. The latter maintain the same extreme opinion of ignorance that the former maintain of knowledge, so that we can not deny that man is immoderate throughout, and that nothing stays him but necessity and inability to go further.

CHAPTER XII

OF PHYSIOGNOMY

In this Essay, as in some others, the reason for the title does not appear till toward the end: the word "physiognomy" does not occur for some thirty pages. It always interests me to trace out the possible origin of this seeming unfitness of the title, and in this case I find the following explanation.

It is evident that Montaigne's thoughts were at this moment much occupied by Socrates, and, lover of beauty that he was, in thinking of him he had felt over and over again how much he regretted that Socrates had "a figure and face so ill favoured and so unfitting the beauty of his soul"; and thus being led to consider what and how much the physiognomy means, he thought it a good subject for an Essay. But, the title being written, it was of the soul of Socrates that he began to think more than of his body, and for some pages he discourses admirably on him and his philosophy. The character of this philosophy leads Montaigne to comment on what he has been observing lately in the peasants — *les pauvres gens* — around him; and from this the transition is natural to a long account of *nos troubles* — the civil war and the plague — and his own share of them.

Sainte-Beuve, in writing of this Essay (*Causeries de Lundi*, IV, 93), says: "The consolation that Montaigne here offers to himself and to others is as lofty and as beautiful as human consolation, without prayer, can be." On another page he remarks: "All this chapter is fine, touching, fitting, giving evidence both of a noble stoical elevation and of the easy and kindly nature that Montaigne by good right said had been given him by birth and education."

A valuable and forever timely part of the Essay is the praise that follows of *simplicity*, of keeping close to nature, to simple and natural conditions of feeling, of which Socrates's address to his judges, "of unimaginable loftiness, true, frank, and just," is a perfect example. These pages deserve immortality. They are chiefly concerned with our feelings about death, but they are of large outlook and inclusion.

From these high moral thoughts, Montaigne slips easily into remarks on the simplicity of the *style* of Socrates, and from these to half-jesting about the ornamentation of his own style from a superabundance of

quotations, in which matter he had "yielded to public opinion." The sentence with which he closes this passage about his own writings — "I have chosen the time when my life all lay open to my sight" — is delightfully like him.

(Sainte-Beuve has somewhere happily said — he can not be quoted too often — that when Montaigne speaks of himself and judges himself, he should always be listened to with smiling intelligence — with something of his own smile.)

Then he enters abruptly on what he was thinking of when he sat down to the Essay — the appearance of Socrates; from that he passes to "physiognomy" in general; from that to his own looks (illustrated by two stories), and so to his own goodness of heart, which makes him merciful even to the wicked; and thus he closes this most interesting meditation, for which still another title might be "A Eulogy of Socrates."

ALMOST all the opinions that we hold are adopted by authority and on credit.[1] This is not amiss; we could not choose them more unwisely than by ourselves in times of such feebleness. The image of the discourses of Socrates which his friends have left us we approve only through respect for the general approbation, not from our judgement; they are not in accordance with our usages. If something of the same sort should be produced at this time, there are few men who would value it. We perceive as admirable only those things that are artificially keen and puffed up and inflated. Those that slip along with artlessness and simplicity easily escape so dull a sight as ours; they have a delicate and hidden beauty; it needs a clear and well-purified sight to discern that secret radiance. Is not artlessness, according to us, akin to foolishness and a quality to object to?

Socrates makes his mind move with a natural and familiar motion — thus speaks a peasant, thus speaks a woman; (*c*) his talk always takes note of carters, joiners, cobblers, and masons;[2] (*b*) and there are inductions and similitudes drawn from the most common and familiar actions of men; every one understands him. Under so mean a form we should never have plucked the nobility and splendour of

[1] Cf. Book II, chap. 12 (Vol. II, p. 317): "For the opinions of men are received in continuance of ancient beliefs, by authority and on credit."

[2] See Plato, *Banquet*.

his admirable conceptions — (*c*) we who regard as flat and low all those ideas not supported by learning, (*b*) who discern riches only in show and pomp. Our world is fashioned solely for ostentation; men are inflated only with wind, and are moved only by bounds, like footballs. This man[1] did not set before himself idle fancies; his aim was to supply us with matters and precepts which really and most directly are of service to life;

> Servare modum, finemque tenere,
> Naturamque sequi.[2]

Likewise he was always one and the same,[3] and mounted, not by fits and starts, but by temperament, to a supreme state of vigour; or, to say better, he did not mount at all, but rather made vigour and obstacles and difficulties subservient to his primal and natural state.[4] In Cato we see clearly that his bearing is constrained much beyond that of common souls; in the brilliant actions of his life, and in his death, we always feel that he is mounted on the great horse. The other[5] treads the ground with an easy and ordinary gait, and carries on most useful discussions, and conducts himself in accordance with the regular course of human life both in death and in the most thorny difficulties that can occur.

It is fortunate that the man most worthy to be known and set before the world as an example is he of whom we have the most certain knowledge. The most clear-sighted men who ever lived have thrown light upon him. The witnesses that we have of him are admirable for their fidelity and for their competence. It is a great thing to have been able to give such order to thoughts as simple as those of a child that, without changing or stretching them, he has brought forth from them the noblest conditions[6] of our

[1] Socrates.

[2] To observe a measure and to hold to an end and to follow nature. — Lucan, II, 381. Lucan is speaking of Cato.

[3] Cf. Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 26.

[4] *Mais ravala plustost et ramena à son point originel et naturel, et lui submit la vigueur*, etc.

[5] Socrates.

[6] *Les plus beaux effects.*

soul. He sets it forth as neither lofty nor rich: he represents it merely as healthy, but, certainly, with a very cheerful and genuine health. With these commonplace and natural springs, with these ordinary, every-day ideas, he built up, without excitement and without spurring himself, not only the most settled but the most lofty and vigorous beliefs, actions, and morals that ever were. (*c*) It was he who brought down human wisdom from the skies, where it was wasting its time, to bestow it on mankind, where is its most appropriate and most laborious business. (*b*) Observe him pleading before his judges; observe by what reasonings he arouses his courage in the hazards of war, by what arguments he fortifies his patience against calumny, tyranny, death, and against his wife's temper; there is nothing in them borrowed from art and from learning; the simplest souls recognise therein their powers and their strength; it is not possible to go back further and to descend lower.[1] He has done a great kindness to human nature by shewing how much it is capable of by itself.

We are, each of us, richer than we think, but we are trained to borrow and to beg; we are taught to make more use of what is others' than of our own. In nothing does man know how to stop at the limit of his need. Pleasure, wealth, power, he grasps of these more than he can hold; his greed is not capable of moderation. I find that in eagerness for knowledge it is the same; he cuts out for himself much more work than he can do and much more than he has reason to do, (*c*) making the utility of knowledge coextensive with its subject-matter; *ut omnium rerum, sic litterarum quoque, intemperantia laboramus;*[2] and Tacitus has reason to praise the mother of Agricola for having curbed in her son a too eager appetite for learning.[3] Looked at steadily, it is a good thing, which has in it, like the other good things for man, much characteristic and innate vanity and weakness, which costs dear. Its acquisition is much

[1] That is, toward the primitive nature of man.

[2] We are afflicted by excess of learning as of every thing else. — Seneca, *Epistle* 106. Taken by Montaigne from J. Lipsius, *Politics*, I, 10.

[3] See Tacitus, *Agricola*, IV.

more hazardous than that of any other food or drink; for of other things, what we have bought we carry home in some vessel, and there we have leisure to examine its value, how much and at what hour we shall use it. But learning we can not from the first put into any other vessel than our minds; we swallow it when we buy it, and leave the market-place either already infected or benefitted. There is some learning which only embarrasses and burdens us instead of giving us nourishment, and some again which, claiming to cure us, poisons us.

(*b*) I have had pleasure in seeing men in some places take, from piety, a vow of ignorance, as well as of chastity, poverty, and penitence. This also is gelding our unruly appetites, to deaden the cupidity which spurs us to the study of books, and to deprive the mind of the pleasurable complacency which tickles us by the general belief in our learning. (*c*) And it is a liberal fulfilment of the vow of poverty when poverty of the mind also is united with it. (*b*) We need but very little learning to live at our ease; and Socrates teaches us that it exists in ourselves, and how to find it there and to make it of use to us. All the knowledge we have that is beyond what comes by nature is almost idle and superfluous; it is much if it does not burden and disturb us more than it serves us, (*c*) *paucis opus est litteris ad mentem bonam;*[1] (*b*) our mind, a blundering and restless instrument, has feverish excesses. Collect your thoughts: you will find in yourself inborn reasonings about death — true reasonings and the best fitted to serve you at need; they are those which make a peasant and entire peoples die as firmly as a philosopher. (*c*) Should I have died less cheerfully before I had read the Tusculans? I think not; and when I discover my real self,[2] I feel that my tongue has been enriched, my heart very little; that is as nature fashioned it for me, and it strengthens itself for the conflict, but only in a natural and usual way; books have served me not so much for instruction as for mental exercise.

(*b*) What if learning, attempting to arm us with new

[1] There is need of little learning to make a good mind. — Seneca, *Epistle* 106.

[2] *Quand je me trouve au propre.*

means of defence against natural disadvantages, has more impressed on our imagination their greatness and their weight than its own reasonings and craft wherewith to shape ourselves? (*c*) These are, indeed, refinements by which it rouses us often to no purpose. Observe even the most compressed and most judicious authors — how they strew about a sound reason many others that are trivial, and, when closely scanned, incorporeal; these are only sophistries which deceive us; but, inasmuch as it may be to our profit, I do not care to scrutinise them too much; there are herein many of this sort, in divers places, either borrowed or imitated. Thus we must be on our guard not to call strength that which is only prettiness, and solid what is only sharp, or good what is only beautiful; *quæ magis gustata quam potata delectant;*[1] not all that pleases nourishes,[2] *ubi non ingenii, sed animi negotium agitur.*[3]

(*b*) Witnessing the efforts of Seneca to make ready for death, seeing him labouring and sweating to resist and to encourage himself, and for so long a time struggling on his resting-place,[4] would have, for me, impaired his good name, had he not, when dying, very gallantly sustained it. His excitement was so ardent and so vehement that it shews that he was (*c*) by disposition hot-blooded and impetuous (*magnus animus remissius loquitur et securius.*[5] *Non est alius ingenio alius animo color.*[6] He must needs be convinced at his own expense), (*b*) and shews somewhat that he was hard pressed by his adversaries. Plutarch's way, inasmuch as it is more disdainful and less constrained, is in my opinion so much the more virile and influential; I could easily believe that the movements of his soul were more

[1] Things that please more when tasted than when drunk. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 5.

[2] *Tout ce qui plaist, ne paist pas.*

[3] Where it is a matter, not of the wits, but of the soul. — Seneca, *Epistle* 75. The original text is: *Aliæ artes ad ingenium totæ pertinent. Hic animi negotium agitur.*

[4] *A le voir suer d'ahan pour se roidir, et pour s'asseurer, et se desbattre si long temps en cette perche.*

[5] A great soul speaks more calmly and serenely. — Seneca, *Epistle* 115.2.

[6] The mind is not of one colour and the soul of another. — Idem, *Epistle* 114.3.

assured and more steady. The one, more acute,[1] pricks us, and impels us with a start, chiefly touching the spirit. The other, more solid, ever instructs and sustains and strengthens us, touching more the understanding. (*c*) The former carries away our judgement, the latter wins it. I have likewise seen other writings even more respected, which, in depicting the combat maintained against the thorns of the flesh, represent them as being so piercing, so powerful and invincible, that we, who are of the dregs of the people, have to wonder no less at the strangeness and unfamiliar force of the temptations described than at the resistance to them.

(*b*) For what purpose do we arm ourselves with these weapons of learning? Look at the fields: the poor people whom we see here and there in them, stooping over their labour, know nothing of Aristotle and Cato, nothing of example or precept; from them does nature draw forth every day purer and more inflexible manifestations of firmness and patience than those which we are so carefully taught. How many do I constantly see who disregard poverty, how many who desire death, or who meet it without alarm or distress! He who is digging my garden buried this morning his father or his son. The very names they give to maladies sweeten and soften the severity. Phthisis is for them a cough, dysentery a looseness, pleurisy a cold; and as gently as they name them, so do they endure them. Their everyday toil is interrupted only by very grievous sickness; only to die do they take to their beds. (*c*) *Simplex illa et aperta virtus in obscuram et solertem scientiam versa est.*[2]

(*b*) I wrote this about the time that a heavy burden of our troubles[3] rested with all its weight on me for several months. On one side I had the enemy at my gates; on the other side, marauders — worse enemies; (*c*) *non armis sed vitiis certatur;*[4] (*b*) and I experienced every sort of military outrage at once.

[1] The text of 1588 has *nous esveille*, which was omitted in 1595.

[2] That simple and frank virtue has been changed into an obscure and ingenious science. — Seneca, *Epistle* 95.

[3] The civil wars.

[4] The struggle was not with arms, but with crimes. — Source unknown.

Hostis adest dextra lævaque a parte timendus,
Vicinoque malo terret utrumque latus.[1]

An unnatural war! Other wars are waged on foreign soil; this one even against its own, preying upon and destroying itself by its own poison. It is of so malign and ruinous a nature that it ruins itself together with every thing else, and rends and dismembers itself in its frenzy. We more frequently see it melt away of itself than from lack of any essential thing or by hostile force. All discipline evades it. Its purpose is to cure sedition, and it is full of it; it desires to chastise disobedience, and sets the example of it; and, employed in defence of the laws, does its share of rebellion against its own laws. Where do we find ourselves? Our own medicine spreads infection!

Nostre mal s'empoisonne
Du secours qu'on luy donne.[2]

Exuperat magis ægrescitque medendo.[3]

Omnia fanda, nefanda, malo permista furore,
Justificam nobis mentem avertere deorum.[4]

In these general maladies we can distinguish at the beginning the well from the sick; but when they continue for any time, as ours does, the whole body is affected by them from head to heels; no part is exempt from corruption, for there is no air which is inhaled so greedily, which so spreads and penetrates, as does license. Our armies now are bound and held together only by foreign cement; we are no longer able to form a steadfast and well-governed corps of Frenchmen. What a disgrace! There is only so much discipline as hired soldiers exhibit to us. As for ourselves, we con-

[1] There is a foe to be feared on the right hand and on the left, and he frightens both sides with an imminent danger. — Ovid, *De Ponto*, I, 3.57.

[2] Our disease is aggravated by the aid we give it. — Source unknown; the lines are found in Bouchet's *Les Serées*, but M. Villey thinks that he took them from Montaigne.

[3] It gains the upper hand and grows worse by treatment. — Virgil, *Æneid*, XII, 46.

[4] All things right and wrong, confused by our evil frenzy, have turned away from us the just mind of the gods. — Catullus, *Epithalamium of Thetis and Peleus*, 406.

duct ourselves at discretion,[1] and each man at his own, not at that of the leader; he has more to do within than without; [2] it is for him who commands to follow, to pay court, to give way; for him alone to obey; all the rest are free and disunited.

I like to see how much faint-heartedness and pusillanimity there is in ambition; through how much debasement and servitude one must attain one's object. But I dislike to see kindly natures, capable of dealing justly, every day become corrupted in managing and commanding this turmoil. Long toleration engenders habit; habit, assent and imitation. We had a sufficiency of ill-conditioned souls without spoiling those that were good and noble; consequently, if we last, there will hardly remain any to whom to entrust the well-being of this realm, in case fortune restores it to us.

> Hunc saltem everso juvenem succurrere seclo
> Ne prohibete![3]

(*c*) What has become of the old precept that soldiers should fear their commander more than the foe?[4] and this wonderful example: that an apple-tree happening to be enclosed within the bounds of the camp of the Roman army, the army was seen to move on the next day, leaving to the owner the entire tale of his ripe and delicious apples?[5] I should be glad if our young men, instead of using their time in less profitable peregrinations and less honourable methods of learning, should employ it, half in witnessing naval warfare under some good captain-commander of Rhodes,[6] half in becoming acquainted with the discipline of

[1] That is, according to individual judgement.

[2] That is, in managing troops than in leading them.

[3] Do not, at least, forbid this young man to come to the rescue of a ruined age. — Virgil, *Georgics*, I, 500. Virgil was alluding to Augustus. It is probable that Montaigne meant to apply Virgil's words to the King of Navarre.

[4] See Valerius Maximus, II, 7, *ext.* 2. Taken by Montaigne from J. Lipsius, *Politics*, V, 13.

[5] See Frontenius, *Stratagematica*, IV, 3.13. Taken by Montaigne from J. Lipsius, *ubi supra*.

[6] This must refer to the commander of the military order known as the Knights of Rhodes, or Knights of Malta, who had possession of the island of Rhodes until 1522, when that island was seized by the Turks, and the Knights were given the island of Malta.

the Turkish army; for it has many differences from ours, and superiorities. One of these is that our soldiers become more lawless when on expeditions, theirs more restrained and circumspect; for trespasses or thefts from the common people, which are punished by flogging in peace time, are in time of war serious offences; thus, for an egg taken without payment the fixed penalty is fifty blows with a cudgel; for any thing else, however trivial, not necessary for nourishment, they are impaled or beheaded without delay.[1] I was astonished to read in the history of Selim, the most cruel conqueror who ever lived, that when he subjugated Egypt, the beautiful gardens surrounding the city of Damascus, which were all open and within the conquered territory, his army being encamped on the very spot, were left unviolated by the hands of the soldiers, because they had not received the signal for pillage.[2]

(*b*) But is there any ill in a government that it is worth while to combat by so deadly a drug?[3] Not even, said Favonius, the usurpation, by a tyrant, of possession[4] of a republic. (*c*) And Plato likewise does not assent that a man should violate the repose of his country in order to cure it, and does not accept the reform which disturbs and endangers every thing, and which costs the blood and ruin of the citizens; declaring it to be the duty of an honest man, in such case, to let every thing alone, only praying God that he will lend his wonder-working hand; and he seems to take it ill of Dion, his great friend, that he had therein proceeded somewhat otherwise.[5] I was a Platonist to this extent before I knew that there had been such a man as Plato in the world. And even if this personage must be entirely refused association with us[6] (who, by the integrity of his thought, deserved by divine favour to penetrate so far into Christian light in the midst of the common darkness of the world in his time), I do not think it well becomes us to let ourselves be instructed by a pagan how great an impiety it is not

[1] See G. Postel, *History of the Turks*.

[2] See Paul Jovius, *History of his own time*.

[3] As civil war.

[4] *L'usurpation de la possession tyrannique*. See Plutarch, *Life of Brutus*.

[5] See Plato, *Epistle* 7 (To the kinsmen of Dion).

[6] That is, as not being a Christian.

to expect from God help that is purely his own, and without our coöperation. I often question whether, amongst so many people who meddle with such concerns, there was to be found none of so weak understanding as to be open to conviction [1] that he proceeded toward reformation by the worst of deformations; that he advanced toward his salvation by the most express causes we have of very certain damnation; that, by overturning the government, the magistracy, and the laws in whose guardianship God has placed him, filling fraternal hearts with parricidal hate, summoning to his aid devils and furies, he can bring succour to the sacrosanct mildness and justice of the divine law.

(*b*) Ambition, avarice, cruelty, revenge, have not enough natural impetuosity of their own; let us attract them and stir them up by the high-sounding title of justice and devotion. There can not be imagined a worse aspect of things than when wickedness is legitimised and assumes, with the permission of the magistrate, the mantle of virtue. (*c*) *Nihil in speciem fallacius quam prava religio, ubi deorum numen prætenditur sceleribus;* [2] the extreme kind of injustice according to Plato is when that which is unjust is regarded as just.[3] (*b*) The common people then [4] had much to endure: not immediate losses only, —

Undique totis
Usque adeoturbatus agris,[5] —

but future ones as well; the living had to suffer, those also who were not yet born. They were robbed, and, consequently, so was I, even of hope, being despoiled of all that they had laid up to live on for many years.

Quæ nequeunt secum ferre aut abducere perdunt,
Et cremat insontes turba scelesta casas.[6]

[1] *A qui on aye en bon escient persuadé.*

[2] There is nothing more deceitful in appearance than a corrupt religion, in which the will of the gods is a veil for crime. — Livy, XXXIX, 16.

[3] See Plato, *Republic*, book II.

[4] When he was writing this. See p. 258 *supra.*

[5] To such an extent is there confusion in the fields on every hand. — Virgil, *Eclogues*, I, 11.

[6] What they can not carry off with them or take away, they destroy, and the wicked mob burns inoffensive huts. — Ovid, *Tristia*, III, 10.65.

Muris nulla fides, squallent populatibus agri.[1]

Besides this blow, I suffered others. I incurred the disadvantages which accompany moderation in such diseased conditions. I was ill treated on all hands; to the Ghibelline I was a Guelph, to the Guelph a Ghibelline; one of my poets says just this, but I know not where. The situation of my house and my intercourse with the men of my neighbourhood shewed me in one aspect, my life and my acts in another. No formal accusations were made, for there was nothing to take hold of: I never depart from the laws, and whosoever should have called me to account would have been found to be more guilty than I;[2] there were unspoken suspicions which circulated underhand, of which there is never a lack in so confused a medley, any more than of envious or foolish minds.

(*c*) I commonly assist the injurious assumptions that fortune scatters abroad against me, by a way that I have always had of shunning the justifying, excusing, or explaining myself, conceiving that to plead for my conscience is to compromise it; *perspicuitas enim argumentatione elevatur;*[3] and as if every one saw within me as clearly as I myself do, instead of retreating from the accusation I go to meet it, and rather heighten it by an ironical and mocking confession, if I am not entirely silent about it, as something unworthy of reply. But they who mistake this for overweening confidence feel scarcely less spite against me than those who mistake it for the weakness of an indefensible cause, especially those of high station, in whose eyes failure to bow down to them is the supreme offence, who are harsh to all justice that knows and feels itself, and is not submissive, humble, and suppliant; I have often run against that post. So it is that at what happened to me in those days (*b*) an ambitious man would have hanged himself; so would an avaricious man. I care not at all for gain, —

[1] There is no safety in walls, and the fields are laid waste by pillage. — Claudian, *In Eutropium*, I, 244.

[2] *M'en eust deu de reste.*

[3] For clear-sightedness is weakened by argument. — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, III, 4.

Sit mihi quod nunc est, etiam minus; et mihi vivam
Quod superest ævi, si quid superesse volent di,[1] —

but the losses that befall me from the misdoing of others, whether theft or violence, affect me almost as much as a man sick and suffering from avarice. The wound is immeasurably more bitter than the loss. A thousand diverse kinds of ills come upon me one by one; I should have endured them with more spirit all at once.[2]

I considered then to whom amongst my friends I could commit a necessitous and unfortunate old age. Having cast my eyes in every direction, I found myself bare. To let oneself fall headlong and from such a height, it must needs be into the arms of a steadfast, vigorous, and fortunate affection; these are rare, if there be any. Finally I recognised that the surest way was to entrust myself and my necessity to myself; and if it befell me to be but coldly in fortune's favour, that I must commend myself the more earnestly to my own favour, must cling fast to myself, and consider myself the more closely. (*c*) In all matters men throw themselves on external supports to spare their own, which alone are sure and alone powerful for him who knows how to arm himself with them; every one turns elsewhere and to the future, inasmuch as no one turns to himself.

(*b*) And I considered that these were profitable disadvantages because, in the first place, bad scholars must be admonished by whipping when reasoning is not sufficient, even as we make a crooked stick straight by fire, and by force of wedges. I have for a very long time preached to myself to keep to myself and to hold aloof from foreign matters; yet am I forever turning my eyes aside; a salutation, a gracious word from a great personage, a kindly glance tempt me. God knows whether there is a scarcity of these nowadays, and what it means! I listen, moreover, without frowning to the bribes offered me to draw me into public view,[3] and I remonstrate so mildly that it seems as

[1] May I have what I now have, or even less; and may I live what is left of my life, if the gods will that there shall be any left. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 18.107.

[2] *Je les eusse plus gaillardement souffert à la foule.*

[3] *Les subornemens qu'on me faict pour me tirer en place marchande.*

if I would more willingly suffer being overmastered. Now a spirit so intractable needs thrashing; and this vessel that warps and falls apart must be tightened up and brought together with lusty blows of the mallet and prevented from stealing away and escaping from itself.

In the second place, this unusual condition was useful as practice in preparing me for worse, — since I who, both by privilege of fortune and by the quality of my character,[1] hoped to be among the last, had come to be among the first overtaken by this tempest, — and instructing me betimes to coerce my life, and make it ready for a new condition. True liberty is having complete control of oneself. (*c*) *Potentissimus est qui se habet in potestate.*[2]

(*b*) In ordinary and quiet times we prepare for moderate and ordinary chances; but, in the confusion we have been in for thirty years, every Frenchman, whether as a private individual or as a citizen, sees himself every hour on the verge of the complete overthrow of his fortunes; proportionately must he keep his heart supplied with stronger and more vigorous provisions. Let us take it kindly of fate to have had us live in an age that is not inert and weak, or idle; a man who would not have been otherwise famous will become so by his ill-fortune.

(*c*) As I seldom read in history of such disorders in other states without regretting that I was not able to be present, to observe them better, so my curiosity makes me in some sort enjoy seeing with my own eyes this noteworthy spectacle of our public death, its symptoms and its manner; and since it is out of my power to delay it, I am glad to be fated to look on at it and to instruct myself by it. So evidently do we seek to recognise even darkly and in the dramas of the stage the image of the tragic play of human fortune: it is not without compassion for what we hear; but our pain awakens our pleasure at the rarity of these woeful events. Nothing animates us which does not keenly touch us;[3] and good historians avoid, like stagnant water and dead sea,

[1] *La condition de mes mœurs.*

[2] He is most powerful who has himself in his own power. — Seneca, *Epistle* 90.

[3] *Rien ne chatouille qui ne pince.*

calm narratives, to recur to seditions and wars to which they know that we invite them.

I doubt if I can decently acknowledge at what little cost to the repose and tranquillity of my life I have passed more than half of it in the midst of the ruin of my country. I give myself a little too good a bargain in patience about events that do not touch me personally; and, as to self-pity, I consider not so much what is taken from me as what remains safe both within and without. There is a certain consolation in evading now one, now another, of the ills that successively glance at us sidelong, and strike hard elsewhere in our neighbourhood; as also in the fact that, in matters of public concern, the more widely extended my interest is, the weaker it is; moreover, it is half true, *tantum ex publicis malis sentimus quantum ad privatas res pertinet;*[1] and the degree of health with which we set out was such that in itself it lessens the regret that we should have felt for it. It was health, but only in comparison with the sickness that has followed it. We have not fallen from a great height; the corruption and brigandage which are found in conditions of dignity and in public service seem to me what is least endurable; to be robbed in a wood is less insulting than in a cautionary town.[2] It[3] was a general coherence of particular members, diseased one more than another, and the greater number affected with inveterate ulcers which no longer admitted of cure or asked for it.

(*b*) This falling to pieces[4] therefore inspirited me rather than cast me down, by the help of my conscience, which bore itself not only tranquilly but proudly; and I found nothing for which to complain of myself. Likewise, as God never sends to mankind evils, any more than goods, wholly unmixed, my health in those days was more than usually good; and whilst without it I can do nothing, so with it there are few things that I can not do. It afforded me the means to awaken all my powers and to hide the harm done

[1] That we feel as much of public calamities as concerns our private affairs. — Livy, XXX, 44.

[2] *En lieu de sureté.*

[3] The health of France.

[4] From the civil convulsions of the time.

me,[1] which could easily have been greater; and I proved in my long-suffering that I had a good seat in fighting Fortune,[2] and that it would need a great shock to unhorse me. I do not say this to incite Fortune to make a more vigorous attack upon me; I am her servant, I hold out my hands to her; in God's name, let her be satisfied! Do I feel her assault? Indeed I do. As those who are overwhelmed and possessed by sadness are none the less permitted at intervals to touch in the dark some pleasure, and a smile escapes them, so I have enough power over myself to make my usual frame of mind tranquil and free from painful imaginings; but I allow myself to be surprised withal by fits and starts, by the stings of these unpleasant thoughts, which overcome me while I am arming myself to drive them away or struggle with them.

Behold another increase of evil which came upon me after the rest. Both without and within my house I was assailed by a plague of unexampled severity; for, as healthy bodies are subject to the most violent maladies inasmuch as they can be mastered only by them, so my very healthful climate, in which contagion, although in the neighbourhood, has never in the memory of man gained a foothold, becoming poisoned, produced strange effects:

> Mista senum et juvenum densantur funera; nullum
> Sæva caput Proserpina fugit.[3]

I had to endure this agreeable state of affairs — that the sight of my house was appalling to me; every thing in it was unguarded and at the mercy of any one who coveted it. I myself, who am so hospitable, was most painfully seeking a refuge for my family — a wandering family, a source of terror to its friends and to itself, and of dismay wherever it sought to establish itself; having to change its abode instantly if one of the band began to feel pain in the tip of a finger. All maladies are at such times thought to be the plague; no one gives himself the trouble to identify them.

[1] *De porter la main au devant de la playe.*

[2] *Quelque tenue contre la fortune.*

[3] The obsequies of old and young crowd pell-mell upon one another; no head does cruel Proserpine pass over. — Horace, *Odes*, I, 28.19.

And the best of the joke is that,[1] according to the rules of the profession, whenever you go near any danger you must be for forty days in anxiety regarding this evil, your imagination working upon you meanwhile after its fashion, and even making you feverish.

All this would have affected me much less had I not been compelled to feel the effects of other people's difficulties and to serve six months, miserably, as a guide to that caravan; for I carry in myself my preservatives — resolution and endurance. Fear of future danger,[2] which is especially dreaded in this disease, disturbs me little, and if, being alone, I had wished to take flight, it would have been a much bolder and more distant one. It is a death which does not seem to me among the worst: it is commonly short, faculties benumbed, without pain, solaced by the general condition, without ceremonial, without mourning, without a crowd. But as for the souls of the neighbourhood, not a hundredth part of them can be saved.

Videas desertaque regna.
Pastorum, et longe saltus lateque vacantes.[3]

In this locality my best revenue is from manual labour; the land that a hundred men used to work for me was long only stubble-fields.[4]

But what an example of resolution did we not see in the simplicity of this whole people! Generally, every one renounced care about life: the grapes remained hanging on the vines — the chief interest of the district; all unconcernedly making ready for death and awaiting its coming, this evening or to-morrow, with face and voice so little terrified that it seemed as if they had come to terms with this necessity and that it was a universal and inevitable condemnation. It is ever such; but with us how slight a hold has resolution in dying! The distance and difference of a few hours, the mere consideration of companionship, makes a difference in our apprehension of it. Regard these

[1] *Et c'est le bon que.* [2] *L'apprehension.*

[3] You can see the domains of the shepherds deserted and the pastures untenanted far and wide. — Virgil, *Georgics*, III, 476. Montaigne substitutes *videas* for *vident*.

[4] *Chauma pour long temps.*

people: because they are all dying in the same month, — children and the young and the old, — they are astonished no more, they weep no more. I saw some who feared to remain behind as in a horrible solitude; and commonly I observed amongst them no other concern than about burials; it grieved them to see the bodies scattered over the fields at the mercy of wild beasts, which immediately multiplied there. *(c)* How human caprices vary! The Neorites, a nation which Alexander subjugated, cast the bodies of their dead into the densest of their woods, there to be eaten; the only sepulture considered fortunate by them.[1] *(b)* One man, in good health, dug his own grave; others laid themselves down in theirs while still living; and a workman of mine drew the earth down upon him with his hands and feet while dying. Was not this sheltering himself, to sleep more at his ease — *(c)* an attempt somewhat similar in spirit to that of the Roman soldiers, who were found after the battle of Cannæ with their heads thrust into holes which they had dug and filled in with their own hands while they smothered?[2] *(b)* In short, a whole nation was suddenly, by common action, settled in a way of living not inferior in firmness to any studied and agreed-upon resolution.

The greater part of the instructions of learning have, as regards encouraging us, more of pretence than of force, and more of ornament than of fruit. We have forsaken Nature, and we seek to teach her her lesson — she who guided us so happily and so safely; and meanwhile the traces of her instruction and what little remains of her image, by favour of ignorance, imprinted upon the life of this rustic crowd of rough men, learning is compelled every day to borrow, in order to make it a pattern to her disciples of perseverance, innocence, and tranquillity. It is a fine thing to see that these men, full of such great knowledge, have to imitate this ignorant simplicity, and to imitate it in the chief actions of virtue; and that our wisdom learns from the very beasts the instructions that are most useful in the most important and essential parts of our life: how it befits us to live and to die, how to manage our property, to love and bring up our children, to maintain justice — a singular testi-

[1] See Diodorus Siculus, XVII, 105. [2] See Livy, XXII, 51.

mony of human infirmity; and that this reason of ours, which we make use of as we like, ever finding some variety and novelty, leaves in us no apparent trace of nature. And men have treated it as perfumers treat oil: they have adulterated it with so many argumentations and conceptions summoned from outside sources that it has become thereby vacillating and peculiar to each individual, and has lost its own unchanging and universal aspect;[1] and we must needs seek evidence of it in beasts subject neither to partiality and corruption, nor to diversity of opinion. It is, indeed, very true that they themselves do not always follow exactly the paths of nature; but the distance that they stray from it is so slight that you can always see nature's track; just as horses that are led by hand make many a bound and caper, but only to the length of their tether, and none the less always follow in the steps of him who guides them; and as the falcon flies when under the restraint of a leash.

(*c*) *Exilia, tormenta, bella, morbos, naufragia meditare,*[2] *ut nullo sis malo tyro.*[3] (*b*) Of what avail to us is the special interest which makes us occupy our mind beforehand with all the disturbances of human nature, and prepare ourselves, with so much toil, for meeting just those which perchance will not touch us? — (*c*) *parem passis tristitiam facit pati posse;*[4] not only the blow harasses us, but the wind and the noise;[5] — (*b*) or, like completely insane people, — for surely it is insanity, — to go just now to have yourself whipped, because it may happen that Fortune will cause you to be whipped some day; (*c*) and to put on your furred gown on St. John's Day[6] because you will need it at Christmas? (*b*) Make yourself familiar in thought,[7] they say, with all

[1] See Plutarch, *Of the love of parents for their children.*

[2] Think upon exile, tortures, wars, diseases, shipwrecks. — Seneca, *Epistle* 91.

[3] So that you may be a novice in no ill-fortune. — Idem, *Epistle* 107.

[4] To be likely to suffer is as saddening as to have suffered. — Idem, *Epistle* 74.

[5] See *Ibid.*: *Ita nos non ad ictum tantum exagitamur, sed ad crepitum.*

[6] That is, in midsummer.

[7] *Jettez vous en l'experience.*

ills that can befall you, especially the most extreme ones; thereby test yourself; thereby steady yourself. On the contrary, the easiest and the most natural way would be to relieve even your mind of them. They will not come soon enough [it is said]; their real existence does not last long enough; the mind must extend and prolong them; and incorporate them in itself beforehand, and cherish them, as if they did not sufficiently weigh upon our senses. (*c*) "They will weigh heavily enough when they come," says one of the masters, not of some mild sect, but of the sternest; "meanwhile befriend yourself, believe what you like best."[1] "How does it avail you to go collecting and anticipating your ill-fortune, and to lose the present by dread of the future, and to be miserable now because you may be so in time?"[2] These are his words. (*b*) Learning truly does us a good office by instructing us very exactly regarding the dimensions of evils, —

Curis acuens mortalia corda;[3]

it would be a pity if any part of their magnitude should escape our perception and knowledge.

It is certain that, for the most part, preparation for death has given more pain than physical suffering has done. (*c*) It was truly said of old, and by a very judicious author, *Minus afficit sensus fatigatio quam cogitatio.*[4] The perception of immediate death inspires us sometimes of itself with a sudden resolution no longer to avoid a wholly inevitable thing. Many gladiators in former times, after they had fought in a cowardly fashion, were seen to accept death courageously, offering their throat to their adversary's blade and inviting the stroke. The distant vision of death to come needs a deliberate firmness and one difficult, consequently, to have in readiness.[5] (*b*) If you know not how to die, be not concerned: Nature will instruct you on the spot, plainly and sufficiently; she will do this business for you accurately; do not give it your attention.

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 13. [2] See Idem, *Epistle* 24.

[3] Sharpening men's wits with cares. — Virgil, *Georgics*, I, 123.

[4] Fatigue affects the senses less than thought. — Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, I, 12.

[5] See Seneca, *Epistle* 30.

Incertam frustra, mortales, funeris horam
Quæritis, et qua sit mors aditura via.[1]

Pœna minor certam subito perferre ruinam,
Quod timeas gravius sustinuisse diu.[2]

We disturb life by anxiety about death, and death by anxiety about life. (*c*) The one sharply pains us, the other affrights us. (*b*) It is not against death that we prepare — that is too instantaneous a thing: (*c*) a quarter of an hour of enduring harmless suffering does not deserve special precepts; (*b*) to tell the truth, we prepare against the preparations for death. Philosophy orders us to have death always before our eyes, to foresee it, and to reflect upon it beforehand; and then gives us rules and precautions to be provided with, that this foresight and this reflection may not pain us. Thus do physicians, who throw us into illnesses that they may have occasion to employ their drugs and their skill.

(*c*) If we have not known how to live, it is unjust to teach us how to die and to shape the end unlike what has gone before;[3] if we have known how to live steadfastly and calmly, we shall know how to die in like manner. They may boast of it as much as they please, — *tota philosophorum vita commentatio mortis est*,[4] — but it is my opinion that it is in truth the limit, but not the aim,[5] of life; it is its end, its extreme point, but not its object; life should have its own plans, its own designs; its proper study is how to order and conduct and endure itself. Amongst several other matters included in the general and principal chapter of knowing how to live is this item of knowing how to die, and it would be one of the lightest, did not our fears give it weight.

[1] In vain, mortals, do you seek to know the uncertain hour of your death, and the path by which it is to come. — Propertius, II, 27.1. The original text reads: *At vos incertam, mortales*, etc.

[2] It is less painful to undergo suddenly certain ruin than to endure fear for a long time. — Maximianus (Pseudo-Gallus), I, 277.

[3] *Et difformer la fin de son total.*

[4] The whole life of philosophers is a contemplation of death. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 30. A reminiscence of a passage in Plato (*Phædo*). Cf. Book I, chap. 20 (Vol. I, p. 106).

[5] *Le bout, non pourtant le but.*

(*b*) The lessons of simplicity, judged by their utility and by their natural truth, are hardly inferior to those which learning teaches us. Men differ in feeling and in strength; they must be guided to what is good for them, according to their natures, and by different roads.

(*c*) Quo me cumque rapit tempestas, deferor hospes.[1]

(*b*) I never find amongst my neighbours a peasant cogitating with what bearing and confidence he may pass that last hour; Nature teaches him to think of death only when he is dying. And then it is with better grace than Aristotle, upon whom death presses with two-fold force, both by its own weight and from so prolonged preconsideration; wherefore it was Cæsar's opinion that the least preconsidered death was the happiest and the least burdened.[2] (*c*) *Plus dolet quam necesse est qui ante dolet quam necesse est.*[3] The bitterness of these imaginings is born of our searching; we are always thus impeding ourselves, desiring to outstrip and domineer over our natural limitations.[4] It is only for the learned when in full health to dine the worse for this habit, and to scowl at the image of death; the man of the people has need neither of remedy nor of consolation save when the shock comes and the stroke falls, and he gives it no attention except at the time of suffering from it.

(*b*) Is it not true that, as we say, the stupidity and lack of apprehension of the common man gives him this patience with present ills and this profound indifference to sinister future events? (*c*) that his soul, because he is more gross and obtuse, is less easily penetrated and excited? (*b*) For God's sake, if it be so, let us henceforth teach stupidity: the best fruit that learning promises us is this, to which stupidity so gently leads her disciples.

We shall not lack good teachers, interpreters of natural simplicity; Socrates will be one of them, for, as I remember,

[1] Wherever the tempest carries me, I approach as a guest. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 1.15.

[2] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar*. Cf. Book II, chap. 13 (Vol. III, p. 7).

[3] He grieves more than is necessary who grieves before it is necessary. — Seneca, *Epistle* 98.

[4] *Voulans devancer et regenter les prescriptions naturelles.*

he spoke about it in this sense[1] to the judges who were deliberating concerning his life: "I fear, sirs, that, if I beg you not to put me to death, I may convict myself of the charge of my accusers, which is that I pretend to more understanding than others, as having some more hidden knowledge of the things which are above us and below us. I know that I have neither been familiar with Death nor known her, nor have I ever seen any one who has had experience of her nature to instruct me thereon. They who fear her assume that they know her; for myself, I know neither what she is, nor what takes place in the other world. Perchance death is an indifferent thing, perchance desirable. (*c*) It is to be believed, however, that, if it be a transmigration from one place to another, there is some amelioration in going to live with so many deceased great men and in being exempt from having longer to do with iniquitous and corrupt judges. If it be an annihilation of our existence, it is still an amelioration to enter upon a long and peaceful night; we find nothing sweeter in life than a tranquil and profound repose and sleep, without dreams.

(*b*) "I carefully avoid those things which I know to be evil—such things as injuring one's neighbours and disobeying a superior, whether it be God or man; those things as to which I know not whether they be good or evil, I can not fear. (*c*) If I am going to die and leave you living, only the gods see whether with you or with me it will be better. Therefore, so far as concerns me, you will order it as it may please you. But, according to my habit of counselling things just and profitable, I rightly say that, regarding your conscience, you will do better to set me free, if you do not see more clearly in my cause than I do myself; and judging according to my past actions, both public and private, according to my intentions, and according to the benefit which so many of our citizens, young and old, derive every day from my conversation, and the fruit that you all gather from me, you can not duly acquit yourselves toward my deserts except by ordaining that, considering

[1] *Environ en ce sens.* This may be called a reminiscence—it is hardly even a paraphrase, not at all a translation — of scattered passages in Plato's *Apology*. There is much more of Montaigne in it than of Plato.

my poverty, I be supported at the Prytenæum at public expense, which I have often known you to grant to others with less reason.

"Do not take it for obstinacy or disdain that I do not, as the custom is, supplicate you and attempt to excite your commiseration. I have friends and kinsfolk, not, as Homer says,[1] being begotten of wood or stone, any more than other men who are able to appear before you in tears and mourning; and I have three weeping children with whom to move you to pity; but I should disgrace our city if, at my age and with such a reputation for wisdom that I am now under prosecution therefor, I were to demean myself to such abject conduct. What would be said of other Athenians? I have ever admonished those who heard my words not to redeem life by a dishonourable act; and in my country's wars, at Amphipolis, at Potidæa, Delos, and elsewhere that I have been, I have shewn by deed how far I was from securing safety by shame. Furthermore, I should interfere with your duty and engage you in unsuitable acts; for it is not for my prayers to persuade you, but for the pure and solid reasons of justice. You have sworn to the gods to decide questions according to law;[2] it would seem as if I desired to suspect and accuse you of not believing that there are any gods; and I should testify against myself that I do not believe in them as I ought, if I distrusted their guidance and refused to leave my cause entirely in their hands. I do wholly trust them, and I hold it for certain that they will decide in this matter as will be most fitting for you and for me; good men, whether living or dead, have no reason to fear the gods."

(*b*) Is not this a solid and sound way of pleading, but at the same time, while simple and honourable, of inconceivable loftiness, frank and just beyond all example, and uttered in such need! (*c*) Truly he was wise to prefer it to that which the great orator Lysias had written for him,[3] excellently composed in judicial style, but unworthy for so noble a criminal. Could a suppliant word have been heard from the

[1] See the *Odyssey*, XIX, 163.
[2] *D'ainsi vous maintenir.*
[3] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Socrates;* Cicero, *De Oratore*, I, 54.

mouth of Socrates? Could that proud virtue have stooped at the height of its display? And would his rich and powerful nature have entrusted his defence to art, and, in his greatest effort, have renounced truth and simplicity, the ornaments of his speech, to adorn it with the fard, figures, and feignings of a pre-learned oration? He did very wisely, and quite in accordance with his nature, in not corrupting an incorruptible tenor of life [1] and so sacred an image of human character, to prolong by a year his decrepitude and wrong the immortal memory of that glorious close of life. He owed his life not to himself, but, as an example, to the world. Would it not have been a public calamity if he had ended it in worthless and obscure fashion? (*b*) Assuredly his own careless and indifferent consideration of his death deserved that posterity should consider it all the more in his stead; this it has done; and there is naught in justice so just as what fortune ordained for his commendation. For the Athenians held in such abomination those who had been the cause of his death that they shunned them like excommunicated persons; they regarded as polluted whatever they had touched; at the bath-houses no one bathed with them; no one saluted them or held converse with them; so that, at last, unable longer to endure this public hatred, they hanged themselves.[2]

Though it may be thought that, having so many other examples in the sayings of Socrates which I might choose to make use of for my purpose, I have made an ill choice of this speech, and it may be judged to be far above common conceptions, yet I have made choice of it intentionally; for I judge otherwise, and I maintain that in range and in simplicity this is a speech that touches on conditions much further back and deeper down [3] than ordinary conceptions; it represents, in its simple [4] courage and its childlike security, pure and primitive natural impressions and ignorance. For it may be believed that we have by nature fear of pain, but

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 31: *tenor vitæ per omnia consonans.*

[2] See Plutarch, *Of Envy and Hatred.*

[3] *Un discours, en rang et en naïfveté bien plus arriere et plus bas.*

[4] *Inartificielle.* Purely a Montaigne word, used only in this place, and found in no dictionary but Littré's.

not of death on its own account; it is a part of our existence no less essential than is living. For what purpose should Nature have engendered in us hatred and horror of it, since it is of the greatest service to her in maintaining the succession and vicissitude of her works; and in this universal community [1] it conduces more to birth and increase than to loss or destruction?

Sic rerum summa novatur.[2]

(*c*) Mille animas una necata dedit.[3]

(*b*) The passing away of one life is the passing on to a thousand others. (*c*) Nature has made self-care and self-preservation instinctive in beasts. They go so far as to be afraid of their own impairment, of hurting and wounding themselves, of our shackling them and beating them — incidents subject to their senses and experience; but that we should kill them, this they can not be afraid of; neither have they the faculty to conceive of death and to form a judgement about it. Yet it is also said that they are seen not only to suffer death cheerfully (most horses neigh when dying, and swans sing), but, still more, to seek it in their need, as is indicated by many stories of elephants.[4]

(*b*) Besides, is not the method which Socrates makes use of here equally admirable for simplicity and vehemence? Truly, it is much more easy to talk like Aristotle and to live like Cæsar than to talk and live like Socrates. There lies the highest degree of perfection and of difficulty: art can not reach it. Now, our faculties are not thus trained; we neither put them to the test nor are aware of them; we invest ourselves with those of other men and let our own lie idle; as some one might say of me, that I have here simply made a collection of unfamiliar flowers, having myself supplied nothing but the thread that binds them.

I have indeed so far yielded to public opinion as to wear borrowed embellishments; but I do not intend them to cover me and hide me; that is the opposite of my design,

[1] *Republique.*

[2] Thus is the whole of things renewed. — Lucretius, II, 75.

[3] One soul destroyed gives birth to a thousand souls. — Ovid, *Fasti*, I, 380.

[4] In this passage of 1595 the text of 1588 is only slightly expanded.

which purposes to display only what is mine and what is mine by nature; and had I trusted myself, I should at all hazards have said nothing but from myself.[1] (*c*) I load myself with them [2] more and more every day, beyond what I proposed, and beyond the original form of my work, in accordance with the whim of the age and from indolence. If this misbecomes me, as I believe, no matter; it may be of use to somebody else. (*b*) A man may quote Homer and Plato who never saw them; and I myself have taken passages elsewhere than at their source. I can presently borrow if I please, without trouble and without skill, — having a thousand volumes about me in this room where I am writing, — from a dozen such scrap-collectors [3] of whose books I seldom turn the leaves, the wherewithal to inlay this treatise on Physiognomy. To stuff myself with citations, I need only the prefatory epistle of a German; and it is thus we seek a pleasing fame with which to cheat the foolish world.

(*c*) These confections of commonplaces, by which so many men make the most of their studies, are of little value save on commonplace subjects, and serve to point out things to us, not to guide us — a ridiculous fruit of learning, which Socrates censures so amusingly in Euthydemus.[4] I have seen books made about things never either studied or understood by the author, he entrusting to divers learned friends the investigation of this and that matter for the compilation, contenting himself for his share with having formed the plan and having by his dexterity bound together this bundle of supplies unknown to him; the ink and paper, at all events, are his. This is to buy or borrow a book, not to make it; it is to shew, not that you can make a book, but — whereof they might be in doubt — that you can not make one.

[1] *J'eusse parlé tout fin seul.*

[2] That is, with these "borrowed embellishments."

[3] *Ravaudeurs.*

[4] In this reference Montaigne had vaguely in mind the general tone of the dialogue of Plato called *Euthydemus*, or, possibly more directly, a confused remembrance of what Socrates there says — not about compilations of commonplaces, but about the composers of speeches to be used by others.

(*b*) A president[1] boasted in my presence of having heaped up two hundred and more extraneous passages in an official decree; (*c*) by proclaiming this, he annulled the renown it had won him; (*b*) pusillanimous and absurd boasting, to my mind, on such a subject and from such a person.[2] (*c*) I do the contrary, and amongst so many borrowings am very glad to be able now and then to conceal one, disguising it and shaping it to a new use, at the risk of letting it be said that it is from my failure to understand its original use; I give it with my hand some special aim, so that it may be the less wholly out of place. (*b*) These others put their thefts on exhibition and reckon them up; so they keep on better terms with the law than I do. (*c*) We naturalists[3] deem that the honour of invention is of great, even of incomparable, preference to the honour of quotation. (*b*) Like those who steal horses, I paint their manes and tails, and sometimes I put out an eye; if their first master used them at an ambling pace, I make them trot, and use them as beasts of burden if they had served for riding.[4]

Had I desired to speak in learned fashion, I should have spoken sooner; I should have written at a time nearer my studies,[5] when I had more wit and more memory; and I should have trusted more to the vigour of that time of life than to this, if I had been inclined to make it my business to write. (*c*) And what if the gracious boon which Fortune through the intervention of this work has lately presented me[6] could have befallen me at such a season instead of this, when it is equally desirable to possess and soon to be lost? (*b*) Two of my acquaintances, men great in this capability, have in my opinion lost by half from having refused to put themselves forward at forty years of age, and waited till they were sixty. Maturity has its failings as immaturity has, and worse; and old age is as disadvantageous in this kind of work as in any other. Whoever places his decrepi-

[1] A president of some "parliament."
[2] In 1588: *Je desrobe mes larrecins et les desguise* (omitted in 1595).
[3] That is, those devoted to what is natural and true.
[4] This sentence of 1588 was omitted in 1595.
[5] Apparently he began to write about 1572, when he was thirty-nine.
[6] This evidently alludes to the friendship of Mlle. de Gournay.

tude under pressure does a foolish thing, if he hopes thereby to squeeze out any products which have not the appearance of coming from [1] one who is unfortunate, or who is a dreamer, or drowsy. Our minds become less fluid, more dense, as we grow old. I deliver my ignorance pompously and abundantly, my knowledge in meagre and sorry fashion — (*c*) the one incidentally and accidentally, the other expressly and principally; and I treat intentionally of nothing but nothing, nor of any other knowledge than that of ignorance.[2] (*b*) I have chosen the time when I have before me the whole of my life, which I have to depict; what remains of it has more relation to death; and of my death itself, should I find it a talkative one as some do, I should still freely inform the world as I go hence.

Socrates was a perfect exemplar of all great qualities; I am vexed that his exterior chanced to be so unhandsome [3] as they say it was, and so unsuited to the beauty of his soul, (*c*) he who was so enamoured of, so infatuated with, beauty. Nature did him a wrong. (*b*) There is nothing more probable than the conformity and connection of the body and the mind. (*c*) *Ipsi animi magni refert quali in corpore locati sint: multa enim e corpore existunt quæ acuant mentem, multa quæ obtundant.*[4] This writer is speaking of an unnatural ugliness and deformity of various parts; but we give the name of ugliness also to a mischance of feature, observed at first sight [but of which the impression passes], which is generally in the face, and offends us by the complexion, by a blemish, by an ungraceful look, or for some cause, often inexplicable, in different parts which are nevertheless well proportioned and perfect. The ugliness that clothed a very beautiful soul in Etienne La Boëtie was of this category. This superficial ugliness, which none the less governs the whole body,[5] is less prejudicial to the condition of the mind,

[1] *Qui ne sentent au.*

[2] *Et ne traicte à point nomme de rien que du rien, ny d'aucune science que de celle de l'inscience.*

[3] *Qu'il eust rencontrê un corps si disgratiê.*

[4] It matters greatly to the soul in what sort of body it is placed; for there are many things in the body which sharpen the mind, many which blunt it. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 33.

[5] *Qui est toutesfois la plus imperieuse.*

and has little significance in the judgement of men. The other, more substantial, which is called, more appropriately, deformity, more frequently harms the inner nature; not every shoe of well-polished leather, but every well-shaped shoe shews the shape of the foot inside. (*b*) It is not to be believed that this discordance occurs without some accident that has interrupted the common course of things;[1] as Socrates said of his ugliness that it would justly indicate an equal measure thereof in his soul, had he not reformed that by education.[2] (*c*) But, in so saying, I hold that he was jesting according to his custom, and never did so excellent a soul fashion itself.

(*b*) I can not say often enough how highly I esteem beauty, a quality potent and advantageous; he[3] called it a brief tyranny; (*c*) and Plato, the special advantage given by nature.[4] (*b*) We have none which surpasses it in influence; it holds the first rank in the intercourse of mankind; it presents itself full face, charms and engrosses our judgement with great authority and marvellous impressiveness. (*c*) Phryne would have lost her cause in the hands of an excellent advocate, had she not, opening her robe, corrupted her judges by the splendour of her beauty.[5] And I observe that Cyrus, Alexander, and Cæsar, those three masters of the world, did not forget it in doing their great deeds, nor did Scipio.

The same word in Greek[6] includes both beauty and goodness, and the Holy Spirit often calls persons good when it means that they are beautiful. I will readily uphold the order of the blessings of life according to the verses found in some old poet, which Plato called trivial:[7] health, beauty, wealth. Aristotle says that the right to command belongs to the beautiful, and, when there are any whose beauty approaches that of the images of the gods, veneration is due

[1] This sentence of 1588 was omitted in 1595.
[2] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, IV, 37.
[3] Socrates. See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristotle.*
[4] See *Ibid.*
[5] See Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, II, 15. Athenæus (XIII) gives credit for the scheme to the advocate, Hyperides, himself.
[6] Καλὸς καγαθός.
[7] See the *Gorgias.* Plato says nothing about their being trivial.

equally to them.[1] To one who asked him why men consorted oftener and longer with beautiful persons, he replied: "That question should be asked only by a blind man." [2] Most philosophers, and the greatest, paid for their instruction, and acquired wisdom by the mediation and favour of their beauty. (*b*) Not only in the men who serve me, but in animals also, I consider it as very near to goodness. Yet it seems to me that this form and fashion of feature, and the lineaments from which others infer certain internal dispositions and our future fortunes, are matters which do not fall directly and simply under the heading of beauty and ugliness; no more than all good odour and freshness of air promise health, or all heavy or ill-smelling air promises infection in time of pestilence.

They who charge ladies with belying their beauty by their morals do not always hit the mark; for, as in a face which may not be too well made there may dwell an expression of honesty and trustworthiness, so, on the contrary, I have sometimes read between two lovely eyes threatening signs of a malign and dangerous nature. There are propitious physiognomies; and in a crowd of victorious enemies you will choose on the instant, from among men you never saw before, one rather than another to whom to surrender and to entrust your life, and not specially from considerations of beauty. A man's appearance is a weak guaranty; however, it has some significance; and had I the scourging of them, the sinners who belie and betray the promises which nature stamped on their brow would be the most roughly treated; I would punish most sternly malice under a kindly aspect. It would seem that there are lucky and unlucky faces; and I think that it requires some skill to distinguish good-humoured from silly ones, stern from harsh, malicious from sad, scornful from melancholy, and other such neighbouring qualities. There are types of beauty not only haughty but sour; there are others that are sweet and, more than that, insipid. As to prophesying therefrom their future chances, those are matters which I leave unsettled.

I have accepted, as I have elsewhere said, very simply and

[1] See Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 3.
[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristotle.*

unquestioningly [1] for myself this ancient precept — that we must not fail to follow Nature, and that the sovereign rule is to conform ourselves to her. I have not, as Socrates did, reformed my natural dispositions by the strength of my reason, and I have not at all interfered artfully with my inclination. I let myself continue even as I came hither: I combat nothing; my two dominant parts live of their own accord in peace and agreement; but my nurse's milk, thanks be to God! was moderately healthful and nourishing.

(*c*) Shall I say this in passing — that I find a certain sort of pedantic integrity,[2] which almost alone is practised amongst us, to be held in higher esteem than it deserves, it being a slave to rules and constrained by hope and fear. I delight in it when of a kind that laws and religions do not make, but perfect and confirm; that feels capable of maintaining itself without assistance, springing up and rooted in us from the seed of universal reason implanted in every not inhuman man. This reasoning power, which straightens Socrates from his vicious bent, makes him obedient to the men and the gods who rule in his city — fearless in death, not because his soul is immortal, but because he is mortal. It is a ruinous instruction for any government, and much more harmful than astute and wily, which persuades the people that religious belief alone, and without good conduct,[3] is sufficient to satisfy divine justice. We are accustomed to seeing an enormous distinction between devotion and conscience.

(*b*) I have an aspect which, both from outward appearance and from expression, wins favour,[4] —

> Quid dixi habere me? Imo habui, Chreme! [5]
>
> Heu! tantum attriti corporis ossa vides! [6] —

and which makes a contrary show to that of Socrates. It has often happened to me that, solely on the strength of my

[1] *Cruement.* [2] *Preud'hommie scholastique.* [3] *Sans les mœurs.*

[4] *J'ay un visage favorable et en forme et en interpretation.*

[5] What did I say — "I have"? Nay, I *had*, Chremes. — Terence, *Heautontimoroumenos*, I, 1.42.

[6] Alas! you see only the bones of a wasted body! — Maximianus (Pseudo-Gallus), I, 238.

appearance and my manner, persons who had no acquaintance with me have greatly trusted me, whether about their own affairs or about mine; and I have derived from it in foreign countries singular and unusual favours. But the two experiences that follow are perhaps worth narrating specially.

A certain person planned to take my household and me by surprise. His scheme was to come alone to my gate and demand admittance somewhat urgently. I knew him by name and had had reason to trust him as my neighbour and as a sort of relation. I had the gates opened to him (*c*) as I do for every one. (*b*) He appeared greatly terrified, his horse out of breath, quite overwrought. He told me this fable: that half a league away he had met with an enemy of his, — whom also I knew, and I had heard of their quarrel, — that this enemy had chased him hotly,[1] and that, being taken by surprise, in disarray, and much weaker in numbers, he had fled to me for safety; that he was in great anxiety about his followers, who, he said, he supposed were dead or prisoners, having been encountered in disorder, and far separated from one another.[2] I tried in all innocence to comfort and encourage him and refresh him. Soon after, behold four or five of his soldiers presented themselves in like condition and affright; and then others, and afterward again others, well equipped and well armed, to the number of twenty-five or thirty, pretending that their enemy was at their heels.

(*c*) This mysterious proceeding began to arouse my suspicion. (*b*) I was not unaware what times I was living in, how greatly my house might be coveted, and I had in mind several examples of others of my acquaintance to whom the same sort of misadventure had happened. However, considering that there was no gain in having begun with kindness if I did not so continue to the end, and not being able to get rid of them without a complete breach, I took the most natural and simplest course, as I always do, bidding them come in. Also, in truth, I am by nature little distrustful and suspicious; I readily incline toward admitting ex-

[1] *Avoit merveilleusement chaussé les esperons.*

[2] The last two clauses (1588) were omitted in 1595.

cuses and the mildest interpretation; I take men as they commonly are, and do not believe in perverse and unnatural inclinations unless I am compelled to do so by strong evidence, any more than I believe in monstrosities and miracles. And, furthermore, I am one who readily entrusts himself to Fortune and lets himself go headlong into her arms; whereof up to this hour I have had more reason to commend than to reprove myself; and I have found her wiser (*c*) and more friendly to my concerns (*b*) than I myself am. There have been some actions in my life the conduct of which may justly be called difficult, or, if you will, prudent. Of these, supposing a third part to have been my own, certainly two thirds are richly hers. (*c*) We err, I think, in that we do not trust heaven enough about ourselves, but claim more for our own management than belongs to us; consequently, our plans so often lead us astray. Heaven is jealous of the extent we give to what is due to human prudence, to the prejudice of its own due, and limits this all the more because we amplify it.

(*b*) These soldiers remained mounted in my courtyard, the leader with me in my hall, who would not have his horse stabled, saying that he should depart immediately as soon as he had news of his men. He found himself master of his undertaking, and it remained only to put it into execution. Often since then he has said — for he did not shrink from telling the tale — that my demeanour and my open-heartedness had wrested his treachery from his hands. He remounted his horse; his men, keeping their eyes constantly fixed upon him to see what signal he would make to them, were much amazed to see him ride away and abandon his advantage.

Another time, relying upon I know not what truce which had been published in our armies, I set off on a journey through a peculiarly ticklish region. My departure was no sooner known[1] than, lo and behold! three or four parties of horse from different places set out to catch me: one of them met me at the third stage, where I was attacked by fifteen or twenty masked gentlemen [well mounted and well armed][2]

[1] *Je ne fus pas si tost esventé.*

[2] The words in brackets were omitted in 1595.

followed by a swarm of mounted bowmen. There I was, a prisoner and surrendered, carried off into the depths of a neighbouring forest, my horse taken from me, I myself stripped, my chests ransacked, my strong-box seized, and horses and retinue distributed amongst new masters. We remained a long time in that thicket, disputing about the amount of my ransom, which they set so high that it clearly appeared that I was little known to them. They entered upon a lively debate about my life. In truth, there were many circumstances that warned me of the danger I was in.

(*c*) Tunc animis opus, Ænea, tunc pectore firmo.[1]

(*b*) I steadily maintained, on the strength of the truce, that I would yield them only the value of their plunderings, which was not to be despised, without promising other ransom. After two or three hours of this, they mounted me on a horse which had no power to run away, and committed me to the special charge of fifteen or twenty musketeers, and distributed my men among others, having ordered that they should lead us away as prisoners by different routes. When I had already gone two or three musket-shots from that place, —

Jam prece Pollucis, jam Castoris implorata,[2] —

behold, a sudden and very unexpected change came over them. I saw the leader approach me with softer words, giving himself the trouble to search through the troop for my scattered possessions, and requiring the principal articles, so far as he could recover them, even to my strong-box, to be restored to me. The best present they made was, finally, my liberty; the rest was of little concern to me in those days.

Truly, I do not even now know the true cause of so sudden a change, and of this reconsideration without any apparent reason, and of so miraculous a repentance, in such

[1] Then was there need of courage, Æneas; then was there need of a stout heart. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VI, 261. Montaigne substitutes *tunc* for *nunc*.

[2] Having besought in prayer now Pollux and now Castor. — Catullus, LXVI, 65.

times, in a premeditated and considered enterprise, and one which through custom had become lawful — for I frankly avowed to them at the outset what party I belonged to and whither I was going. The chief man amongst them, who unmasked and told me his name (I should like to test, in my turn, what would be his conduct in such a mischance),[1] then said to me repeatedly that I owed this deliverance to my bearing, to the frankness and firmness of my language, which made me undeserving of such a misadventure; and asked security from me in a like case. It is possible that the divine goodness chose to use this whimsical means [2] for my preservation; it saved me again the next day from other worse snares of which these very persons had warned me. The last of these two gentlemen is still living to tell the tale; the first was killed not long ago.

If my aspect did not answer for me, if people did not read in my eyes and in my voice the simplicity of my intention, I should not have lived so long without quarrels and without giving offence, considering my indiscreet freedom of saying at random whatever comes into my head and of judging things rashly. This habit may justly appear uncivil and unsuited to our custom; but I have never met with any one who deemed it insulting and malicious, or who was stung by my freedom if he had it from my own mouth; reported words have a different sound and a different sense. Besides, I hate no man, and I am so loath to give offence that I can not do it even in the interest of reason itself; and when there has been occasion for me to sentence criminals, I have preferred to fail in justice; (*c*) *ut magis peccari nolim quam satis animi ad vindicanda peccata habeam*.[3] Some one, it is said, reproached Aristotle for having been too merciful to a wicked man. "I have indeed," he said, "been merciful to this man, but not to his wickedness." [4] Judgements are ordinarily exasperated to severity by horror of the crime. That very emotion chills my judge-

[1] The parenthetical clause was omitted in 1595.

[2] That is, his bearing.

[3] So that I am desirous that sins should not be committed, rather than brave enough to punish them when committed.—Livy, XXIX, 21.

[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristotle*.

ment; horror of the murder that has taken place makes me fear to cause a second; and the ugliness of the past cruelty makes me abhor any imitation of it. (*b*) To me, who am a man of no importance,[1] may be applied what was said of Charillus, King of Sparta: "He can not be good, since he is not bad to the wicked." [2] Or thus, for Plutarch presents him in these two ways, as he does a thousand other matters, differently and contrariwise: "He must indeed be a good man, since he is good even to the wicked." [3] As, in lawful actions, it annoys me to busy myself about them when they concern persons to whom they are displeasing, so, to speak the truth, in unlawful ones I am not conscientious enough about them when they concern persons who welcome them.

CHAPTER XIII

OF EXPERIENCE

It is to be regretted that this last of all the Essays, written in 1587, is not one of the most interesting. Some of the pages are undesirably garrulous about his physical conditions, and there are many extravagant paradoxes arising from ignorance and also from thoughtlessness and (despite the title) from inexperience.

But in other respects it is expressive of Montaigne's temper of mind in what seemed to him his old age. It, in every sense, records his "experience" of life. It is so peculiarly personal in tone that it is only those who have long associated with Montaigne who can read it rightly; it is not till the erroneous traditional views of Montaigne's character have disappeared that the general reader will understand this Essay at all truly. It has little solidity, but it is like a lusty vine beautifying the dead wall of life; and none of its grapes is sour. The sweetness, the serenity, the sadness of our dear, gay, and vehement and irritable friend, touch these pages with softer lights than gleam almost anywhere else. The course of life — experience — made Montaigne more sensitive physically and mentally than in youth, but more wise; and his wisdom resolved itself into a love of life "such as it has pleased God to grant us."

His "experience" leads to no complaints about the order of things in heaven or on earth, and as little to raptures of memory or of hope. He is simply and calmly *content*.

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[1] *Qui ne suis qu'escuyer de trefles.*

[2] See Plutarch, *Of Envy and Hatred.*

[3] See Idem, *Life of Lycurgus.*

Had Montaigne known the Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius, he might have quoted in this Essay the words: "Pass then through this little space of time conformably to nature, and end thy journey in content, just as an olive falls off when it is ripe, blessing the earth which produced it, and thanking the tree on which it grew."

We desire to *know*, the Essay begins by saying; but experience is as uncertain a guide as reason, because of its infinite diversity; in jurisprudence no countless number of laws can equal or control the instances of its variety. Therefore the fewer laws we make, the better, all the more since nature's laws are better than man's. Lawyers are as poor members of society as physicians, and even our language becomes obscure in legal matters.

Almost it would seem as if in all things explanations but added difficulties; to interpret the interpretations is harder than to interpret the original matter. Feeble minds are entangled in the perplexities of learning: generous minds in the search for knowledge find no end to their investigations.

So there are countless books about books. He himself has been led to comment on his own writings. There are more doubts about the opinions of Luther than Luther himself suggested about the Holy Scriptures; and such dissensions resolve themselves into the meaning of words. He returns to the thought on an earlier page of the diversity of human actions and the effect of this upon the laws, and he says: "Neither do events entirely differ from one another; every thing has some likeness to every thing else. But all instances are imperfect, and consequently imperfect also all results of experience. And the laws can bring things into connection only by hook and by crook. The private laws of ethics are difficult enough to lay down, but public laws of general guidance are yet more so, and our justice is a perfect witness to human incompetence." And he gives illustrations and comments. Then, after a moment's personal rejoicing that he himself has never fallen into the hands of the law, he passes into the weighty and interesting passage about the foundations of the law. And then follows the interesting page (added in 1595) about the rules of nature and the *doulx chevet* — the soft pillow for a sound head secured by indifference, by incuriosity.

The previous pages might be entitled "Of the Laws of France, and Law in general," the following ones "Of the Knowledge of Oneself." On this subject he dwells for four pages; and then passes to the knowledge of others induced by knowledge of oneself: a knowledge which he confesses is in his case attained as gropingly, and to be uttered in as desultory points — *articles descousus* — as all other knowledge.

He returns to his self-knowledge with an interesting little bit of self-portraiture: and from his own dealings with princes passes to the consideration of the man who *should* be their adviser, and of the need kings have of such men.

Then, at last, begins the Essay "Of Experience": it so clearly begins here, with "In fine, all this jumble" (p. 309), that I am almost inclined to believe that he affixed the preceding pages merely because he

did not see what else to do with them, and because he saw the word "experience" on the first page. Montaigne's "reading over" of his own writings was certainly very irregular, and at times very reluctant; and there is reason to believe, there are many indications, that sixteenth-century authors did not read their own proof-sheets. I think Montaigne never considered one of his Essays in the light of a *whole*. I think he calls them truly pieces of *marqueterie;* they are mosaics, made up of separate stones set in irregular patterns; I am audacious enough to believe that an editor might be trusted, and might trust himself occasionally, to rearrange them slightly.

The pages that follow are a record of his bodily life, of his own physical experiences, his bodily habits and conditions, and those of others, with special study of his experience of the stone. There is a paragraph — interesting but quite misplaced — on the life of a soldier. Equally misplaced is the delightful passage about his father and his father's wish to connect him with *le peuple*. And, apropos of his teeth, there is a fine stoical passage about old age.

Then he passes to the consideration of the proper manner of enjoying physical pleasure, and the charming passage, "When I dance, I dance . . . " introduces the naturalness, the honourableness of enjoying such pleasures — of studiously delighting in prosperity. All these pages are eminently characteristic, most admirable in their serene and self-possessed wisdom: and any abstract of them would be idle: they are to be read and re-read.

The last page is the most characteristic possible: there could not be a more fitting conclusion to the Essays; it seems to sum them all up. His humour is in the sentence beginning "Much good does it do us to mount on stilts"; his wisdom in the next; his sensitiveness and tenderness in the next; and the words with which he introduces the beautiful concluding citation from Horace are the words with which the reader may phrase his thought of Montaigne himself: "the protector of health and wisdom, but cheerful and companionable."

THERE is no desire more natural than the desire for knowledge. We make trial of all means that can lead us to it. When reasoning fails us, we then make use of experience, —

(*c*) Per varios usus artem experientia fecit,
Exemplo monstrante viam,[1] —

(*b*) which is a much feebler and lower means; but truth is so great a thing that we must not disdain any medium that leads us to it. Reason has so many shapes that we know

[1] Through various practices experience has brought forth art, example pointing the way. — Manilius, *Astronomica*, I, 59. Taken from J. Lipsius, *Politics*, I, 8.

not which to take hold of; experience has no less. The conclusions that we seek to draw from the comparison of events are not reliable, inasmuch as events are always dissimilar. There is no quality so universal in their appearance as diversity and variety. The Greeks and the Latins and ourselves all make use of the similitude of the egg as the most perfect example of the kind; none the less, there have been men, notably one at Delphi,[1] who detected marks of difference in eggs so that he never took one for another, (*c*) and, having many hens, could tell which had laid a certain egg. (*b*) Dissimilarity enters of necessity into our works; no skill can attain similitude. Neither Perrozet, nor any other, can so carefully polish and whiten the backs of his cards that some gamblers do not distinguish them when merely passing through the hands of another. Resemblance does not make things so much the same as dissemblance makes them different.[2] (*c*) Nature has constrained herself to make nothing other than any thing else.[3]

(*b*) Yet little to my liking is that man's opinion who thought by the multitude of laws to curb the authority of judges by marking the limits of their actions;[4] he did not perceive that there is as much freedom and scope in the interpretation of laws as in making them. And they make fools of themselves who think to lessen our discussions and to check them by referring us to the express words of the Bible; because our minds find no less spacious a field in criticising the meaning of others than in putting forward their own; and as if there were less animosity and bitterness in glossing than in inventing. We see how mistaken he was, for we have in France more laws than all the rest of the world put together, and more than would be needed to govern all the world of Epicurus; (*c*) *ut olim flagitiis, sic nunc legibus laboramus;*[5] (*b*) and yet we have left so much

[1] Cicero (*Academica*, II, 18) says that there were several men at *Delos* (not Delphi) who had this faculty.

[2] See Plutarch, *Of Envy and Hatred.*

[3] See Seneca, *Epistle* 113: *Exegit* [*natura*] *a se ut quæ alia erant et dissimilia essent et imparia.*

[4] *En leur taillant leurs morceaux.*

[5] As we once suffered from crimes, so we now suffer from laws. — Tacitus, *Annals*, III, 25. Taken by Montaigne from J. Lipsius, *Politics*, II, 11.

for our judges to consider and decide, that there was never freedom of action so powerful and so uncontrolled. What have our law-makers gained by selecting a hundred thousand kinds of special acts and attaching to them a hundred thousand laws? Such a number is in no proportion to the infinite diversity of human actions. The multiplication of our contrivings will never equal the variation of examples. Add to these a hundred times as many, still it will never come to pass that amongst future events any one in all that vast number of selected and recorded events will fall in with one to which it can be joined and paired so exactly that there will not remain some circumstance and diversity which will require a different consideration of judgement. There is little relation between our actions, which are in perpetual mutation, and fixed and unchanging laws. The most desirable, the most simple and general, are the most rare; and I believe that it would be better to have none at all than to have them in such numbers as we have.

Nature gives us always happier laws than those we give ourselves; witness the description by the poets of the Golden Age and the condition in which we see those nations to be living which have no other laws. Observe those who employ as their only judges in their controversies the first passers-by travelling amongst their mountains;[1] and others, on market-day, choose one of themselves, who decides on the spot all their lawsuits. What risk would there be in having the wisest men thus settle our disputes according to circumstances and at sight, without being bound by precedents and consequences? For every foot its own shoe. King Ferdinand, when sending out colonies to the Indies, wisely provided that they should take thither no lawyers,[2] for fear that lawsuits might multiply in that new world, jurisprudence being a science productive, by its nature, of altercation and division.[3] He judged with Plato that lawyers and doctors are a bad provision for a country.[4]

How is it that our ordinary language, so simple for every other purpose, becomes obscure and unintelligible in a contract and a testament; and that a man who expresses him-

[1] See G. Bouchet, *Sérée* IX.
[2] *Escholiers de la jurisprudence.*
[3] See *Ibid.*
[4] See Plato, *Republic*, book III.

self very clearly in whatever else he says and writes can find no way of declaring his meaning in these which does not fall into uncertainty and contradiction, if it be not that the chief men of this art, applying themselves with peculiar care to selecting solemn words and forming sentences arranged with art, have so weighed every syllable and so minutely examined every sort of combination, that they are seen to be all bewildered and confused by the infinite number of figures and very minute divisions which no longer can be brought under any rule and prescribed order or to any certain understanding. (*c*) *Confusum est quidquid usque in pulverem sectum est.*[1] (*b*) Who has not seen children trying to separate a mass of quicksilver into a number of parts? The more they press it and push it and strive to control it, the more they fret the liberty of that generous metal; it eludes their skill and divides and scatters itself indefinitely. It is the same in this case; for by the sub-division of these subtleties we are taught to increase our doubts; we are put in the way of magnifying and diversifying difficulties; they are amplified and dispersed. By the sowing of questions and the reshaping of them, the world is made to fructify and abound in uncertainty and in dispute; (*c*) as the soil becomes more fertile, the more it is broken up and deeply dug. *Difficultatem facit doctrina.*[2] (*b*) We doubted with Ulpian and we still doubt with Bartolus and Baldus.[3] There is need of effacing the traces of this infinite diversity of opinions, far from decking ourselves out in them and passing them on to posterity.

I know not what to say to it, but it is evident from experience that so many interpretations dissipate the truth and destroy it. Aristotle wrote to be understood; if he failed, still less will a less able man, and an outsider, succeed than he who sets forth his own conception. We work over some matter and increase its volume by diluting it; of one subject we make a thousand, and, multiplying and subdividing, we fall into the infinity of atoms of Epicurus. Never did two men judge alike of the same thing, and it is

[1] Whatsoever is divided until it is only dust becomes confused. — Seneca, *Epistle* 89.3.

[2] Learning creates difficulties. — Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, X, 3.16.

[3] Cf. Book II, chap. 12 (Vol. II, p. 375).

impossible to find two opinions exactly similar, not only in different men but in the same man at different times. I often find grounds for doubt in passages which the commentary has not deigned to touch upon. I stumble more easily in a level country, like certain horses I know which trip more frequently on a smooth road.

Who would not say that commentaries increase doubts and ignorance, since there is to be found no book, human or divine, with which the world concerns itself, of which the interpretation does away with the difficulty? The hundredth commentary hands it over to the following one, even more full of thorns and rough places than the first had found it. When is it ever agreed amongst us that "this book contains enough in itself; there is now nothing more to be said"? This is most manifest in chicanery; we give lawful authority to innumerable doctors of law, innumerable decrees, and as many interpretations. Nevertheless, do we find any end to the needs of interpreting? Is there seen herein any progress and advance toward tranquillity? Do we need fewer advocates and judges than when the mass of law was still in its first infancy? On the contrary, we obscure and bury the understanding of it. We can no longer get at it except by permission of many fences and barriers. Men do not recognise the natural disease of their mind: it does nothing but ferret and search, and is incessantly beating the bush and idly obstructing and impeding itself by its work, and stifles itself therein like our silk-worms; *mus in pice*.[1] It thinks that it beholds far off I know not what glimmer of light and fancied truth; but whilst the mind hastens thither, so many difficulties block its path with obstacles and new quests, that they turn it from the path and bewilder it; not unlike what happened to Æsop's dogs, which, discovering what looked like a dead body floating in the sea, not being able to approach it, undertook to drink up all the water in order to make a dry passage to it, and so choked themselves.[2] (*c*) This is in accord with what one

[1] There is a mouse in the pitch.—Latin proverb; see Erasmus *Adages*, II, 3.68.

[2] See Plutarch, *Common conceptions against the Stoics*. These dogs are not mentioned in any fable of Æsop, and Montaigne undoubtedly took the ancedote from Plutarch, through Amyot. But Amyot says

Crates said of the writings of Heraclitus, that they needed for a reader a good swimmer who would not be swallowed up and smothered by the depth and the weight of their teaching.[1]

(*b*) It is only personal weakness that makes us content with what others, or we ourselves, have found in this chase after knowledge; a man of more ability will not be content with it. There is always a place for one who follows us, (*c*) yes, and for following ourselves, (*b*) and a different road to take. There is no end to our investigation; our end is in the other world. (*c*) It is a sign of diminished power when the mind is content — or a sign of weariness. No generous spirit stands still within itself; it always reaches forward and goes beyond its strength; it has sallies not equalled by its deeds; if it does not advance and press on, if it does not take its stand and give blows and dash hither and yon,[2] it is but half alive. (*b*) Its pursuits are without limit and without method; its aliment is wonder, search, and ambiguity; which Apollo[3] sufficiently made evident, speaking always to us with double meanings, obscurely and indirectly, not feasting us, but cheating and occupying us. It has an irregular, perpetual movement, without object. Its conceptions incite and follow and reproduce one another.

> Ainsi voit l'on, en un ruisseau coulant,
> Sans fin l'une eau après l'autre roulant;
> Et tout de rang, d'un eternel conduict,
> L'une suit l'autre, et l'une l'autre fuyt.
> Par cette-cy celle-là est poussée,
> Et cette-cy par l'autre est devancée;
> Tousjours l'eau va dans l'eau, et tousjours est-ce
> Mesme ruisseau, et tousjours eau diverse.[4]

that the dogs were after certain *cuyrs* (hides) that they saw on the water, and that they died rather than touch them. Amyot's word *cuyrs* is an accurate translation of Plutarch's δερμάτων.

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Heraclitus*. In the *Life of Socrates*, Laertius attributes to him a similar remark.

[2] *Tournevire* — a word introduced by Montaigne.

[3] Through his oracle.

[4] In this wise we see, in a purling stream, how one ripple follows endlessly after another, and all along, in never-ending sequence, each follows the one before and each flees from the one coming after. By

There is more ado with interpreting interpretations than with interpreting the things themselves, and more books about books than about any other subject; we do nothing but comment on each other. (*c*) Every thing swarms with commentaries; of authors there is a great dearth. Is not the chief and most famous learning of our times learning to understand the learned? Is it not the common and final object of all studies? Our opinions are grafted one on another; the first serves as a stalk for the second, the second for the third; in like manner we clamber up from step to step, and it therefore happens that the one who has mounted highest has often more honour than desert; for, mounted on the shoulders of the penultimate, he is only the least bit higher.

(*b*) How often, and perchance foolishly, have I enlarged my book to speak of itself! (*c*) Foolishly, if it were only for this reason, that it befits me to remember what I say of others who do likewise: "That those so frequent glances at their works testify to a heart trembling with love; and that the even contemptuous rudeness with which they batter them is but the pretty way and affectation of maternal regard," as Aristotle points out, in whose eyes to overvalue and to undervalue oneself often arise from one and the same quality of arrogance.[1] As for my excuse, it is this: that I should be allowed more liberty than others in this matter, inasmuch as of set purpose I write of myself and of my writings, as of my other actions; that my theme turns upon itself; I know not whether this will be accepted.

(*b*) In Germany I saw that Luther left behind him as many schisms and dissensions — yes, more — about the uncertainty of his opinions, as he himself raised about the Holy Scripture. Our discussion is verbal; I ask what Nature means, what Pleasure, Circle, and *Substitution*.[2] The question is one of words and is paid back in like manner. A stone is a body; but he who should urge, "And body, what

the one the other is driven on; the other goes ahead of the one; water ever flows into water, and it is ever the same stream, and ever different water. — La Boëtie.

[1] See Aristotle, *Nicomachæan Ethics*, IV, 13.

[2] The significance of this term has never been satisfactorily explained.

is that?" — "Substance." — "And substance, what?" — and so on, would at last drive the respondent to the end of his dictionary. One word is exchanged for another word, often less understood; I know better what Man is than what Animal is, or Mortal, or Reasonable. To satisfy one doubt, they give me three; it is the head of Hydra. Socrates asked Memnon [1] what virtue was. "There is," said Memnon, "the virtue of man and of woman, of a magistrate and of a private person, of a child and of an old man." "This is excellent!" cried Socrates; "we were in search of one virtue and you bring us a swarm of them." We impart one question, we are given in return a hive full. As no event and no bodily form wholly resembles another, so none is wholly different from another. (*c*) A happy mingling on the part of nature! If our faces were not similar, we could not distinguish man from beast; if they were not dissimilar, we could not distinguish man from man.[2] (*b*) All things are connected by some similitude; every example halts, and the relation apparent from experience is always feeble and imperfect; we have to add comparison to it by some tie. Thus it is that the laws do their work and adapt themselves to each one of our affairs by some wire-drawn, forced, and roundabout interpretation.

Since ethical laws, which look to the individual duty of each of us separately, are so difficult to frame as we see that they are, it is no wonder if those which control so many individuals are even more so. Consider the form of this justice [3] which rules us: it is a very witness to human imbecility, so much contradiction and error is there in it. What we find to be lenity and severity in justice — and we find so much of both that I know not whether what lies between is as often found therein — are unhealthy and unjust features of the real body and substance of justice. Some peasants come to me in haste, to inform me that they have just left, in a forest belonging to me, a man with countless wounds, who is still breathing, and who begged them, for pity's sake, to give him water and to help him rise. They

[1] See Plutarch, *Of the plurality of friends*. Cf. Plato, *Meno*.
[2] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XXI, 8.
[3] *Justice*, here used in the sense of administration of the law.

say they dared not go near him, but ran away, for fear the officers of justice would catch them, and, as happens to those found near a murdered man, they would be called in question about this mishap, to their total ruin, as they had neither the ability nor the money to defend their innocence. What should I say to them? It is certain that that humane service would have brought them into trouble.

How many innocent people have we discovered who have been punished, I will say without fault on the part of the judges, and how many have there been whom we have not discovered? This has happened in my day: certain men were condemned to death for homicide, the sentence being agreed upon and determined, although not actually pronounced. At this juncture, the judges were advised, by the officials of a subordinate court in the neighbourhood, that they held in custody prisoners who had openly confessed this homicide and cast unquestionable light on the whole business. None the less, they deliberated whether they should suspend and postpone the execution of the sentence passed upon those first accused; they discussed the unusualness of the case and its consequences in the way of hindering judgements; that, the condemnation being passed according to law, the judges had no power to revoke it. In short, the poor devils were sacrificed to the formulas of justice. Philip,[1] or some other, dealt with a similar dilemma in this wise: by a considered judgement he had sentenced one man to pay heavy damages to another. The truth coming to light some time after, he found that he had decided unjustly. On one side was the legitimate power of the facts of the case, on the other side the legitimate power of judicial forms;[2] he to some degree satisfied both, by letting the sentence stand and recompensing out of his own purse the loss of the condemned party. But it was with a reparable accident that he had to deal. My men were irreparably hanged. (*c*) How many condemnations I have seen more criminal than the crime!

(*b*) All this brings to my mind these ancient opinions: that he must needs do wrong in details, who desires to do

[1] It was Philip of Macedon. See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.
[2] *La raison de la cause . . . la raison des formes judiciaires.*

right in sum and substance, and injustice in small things who desires to succeed in doing justice in great things;[1] that human justice is formed on the same model as the art of healing, according to which whatever is useful is also just and honourable;[2] and what was maintained by the Stoics, that Nature herself proceeds in opposition to justice in most of her works; (*c*) and what the Cyrenaics maintained, that there is nothing inherently lawful,[3] that customs and laws constitute justice; and the Theodorians, who consider theft, sacrilege, every kind of licentiousness, lawful for the sage, if he knows it to be profitable to him.[4]

(*b*) There is no remedy: I am in this like Alcibiades, that I will never appear personally, if I can avoid it, before a man who can decide as to my fate,[5] when my honour and my life may depend more on the skill and care of my attorney than on my innocence. I would trust myself to a form of justice that would recognise my well-doing as well as my wrong-doing, when I should have as much to hope as to fear. Indemnity is not sufficient recompense for a man (*c*) who does better than not doing amiss. (*b*) Our justice offers us but one of its hands, and that the left; let him be who he may, he comes off with loss.

(*c*) In the kingdom of China, whose government and whose arts, without intercourse with and knowledge of ours, surpass ours in many kinds of excellence, and whose history teaches me how much more spacious and various the world is than either the ancients or we ourselves discover, the officials deputed by the prince to inspect the condition of his provinces, whilst they punish those who are guilty of malversation in their functions, also remunerate with simple

[1] See Plutarch, *Political Precepts*.

[2] See Idem, *Of the delays of divine justice*.

[3] *Juste de soy*. See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristippus*.

[4] See *Ibid*.

[5] See Plutarch, *Life of Alcibiades*. Alcibiades was in hiding, and some one who recognised him said to him: "How is this? have you no faith in your country's justice?" — "Yes, indeed," he replied, "when it is a question of any thing else; but when my life is at stake, I would not trust my own mother, for fear lest, by mistake, she should put in a black bean when she meant to put in a white one." (One was the sentence of condemnation, the other of acquittal.)

liberality those who have conducted themselves therein better than is ordinary and beyond the necessity of their duty; those under examination present themselves, not only to be guaranteed from loss, but to gain something; not simply to be paid, but to receive gifts.[1]

(*b*) No judge has yet, thanks be to God! spoken as a judge to me in any cause whatsoever, whether my own or another's, criminal or civil; nor has any prison received me, even as a visitor. My imagination makes the sight of one disagreeable to me, even from outside. I am so infatuated with liberty that, were I forbidden access to some corner of the Indies, I should in consequence live less at my ease; and so long as I can find open land and air elsewhere, I will never cower in a place where I must be hidden. Good God! how ill could I endure the condition in which I see so many people — fettered to one part of this realm, deprived of the right to enter the chief cities and of access to the courts, and of the use of the public roads, for having quarrelled with our laws! If those under which I live should even shake their finger at me by way of menace, I should instantly go elsewhere, no matter where, to seek others. All my small prudence in these civil wars in which we are engaged is employed to the end that they shall not interfere with my liberty to go and come.

Now the laws maintain their credit, not because they are just, but because they are laws: this is the mystical basis of their authority; they have no other, (*c*) and this serves them well. They are often made by fools;[2] more often by men who, from hatred for equality, lack a sense of equity; but always by men, fruitless and vacillating fabricators. There is nothing so awkwardly and abundantly faulty as the laws, or so commonly. (*b*) Whosoever obeys them because they are just does not obey them for what he justly should. Our own French laws to some degree lend a helping hand, by their irregularity and lack of order, to the confusion and corruption which are seen in their administration and execution. What is commanded is so perplexing and unsettled that there is some excuse both for disobedience and for blunders of interpretation, of administration, and of obser-

[1] See G. de Mendoza, *History of China*. [2] See Plato, *Gorgias*.

vance. Whatever then may be the fruits we may gain from experience, that which we derive from outside examples will hardly be of much service for our education, if we profit so little by that which comes to ourselves, which is more familiar to us, and is surely sufficient to instruct us in what we need.

I study myself more than any other subject; this is my metaphysic, this is my physic.[1]

Qua Deus hanc mundi temperet arte domum;
Qua venit exoriens, qua deficit, unde coactis
Cornibus in plenum menstrua luna redit;
Unde salo superant venti, quid flamine captet
Eurus, et in nubes unde perennis aqua,
(*c*) Sit ventura dies mundi quæ subruat arces,
(*b*) Quærite, quos agitat mundi labor.[2]

(*c*) In this universe,[3] I allow myself to be led ignorantly and carelessly by the general law of the world; I shall understand it well enough when I feel it; my learning can not make any alteration in its course; it will not change itself for me; that is folly to hope for, and it is greater folly to be thereby disturbed, since it is necessarily uniform, manifest, and common to all. The goodness and competence of him who governs us discharges us wholly and entirely from concern about government; philosophic investigations and reflections serve only as food for our curiosity. The philosophers, with a great appearance of reason,[4] refer us to the rules of Nature; but those have nothing to do with such sublime knowledge; these thinkers falsify them and present us with Nature's face printed too high in colour and too arti-

[1] *Metaphysic*, the study of supernatural things; *physic*, the study of natural things.

[2] By what art God rules the mansion of the universe; whence comes the rising moon, and whither it sets, and whence each month, with horns joined, returns to its full; where the winds overwhelm the sea; what regions Eurus seizes with his blast, and why water always turns into clouds; and whether a day will come which will overthrow the towers of the universe . . . seek, you whom the toil of the universe disturbs. — The first six lines are from Propertius, III, 5, 26; the last from Lucan, I, 417.

[3] *Université*, in the Latin sense.

[4] *Avec grand raison;* the phrase is ironical.

ficialised,[1] whence arise many different portraitures of an unchanging subject. As she has furnished us with feet for walking, so has she with wisdom to guide us through life; a wisdom not so subtle, sturdy, and ostentatious as that which they devise, but suitable for us, easy, quiet, and salutary, and which does very well what the other talks of, for him who has the good-fortune to know how to use it simply and properly, that is to say, naturally. To entrust oneself most entirely to Nature is to entrust oneself to her most wisely. Oh, how pleasant and soft a pillow is ignorance and incuriosity, whereon to rest a well-formed head!

(*b*) I should prefer to understand myself well by study of myself rather than of Plato.[2] From my own experience I find enough to make me wise were I a good scholar. He who brings to memory the violence of his past anger, and how far that excitement carried him, sees the ugliness of that passion more plainly than Aristotle, and conceives a juster hatred of it. He who calls to mind the ills that he has incurred and those that have threatened him, and the trivial occasions that have moved him from one state to another, thereby prepares himself for future changes and for the examination of his condition. Cæsar's life furnishes no clearer example for us than our own; both as emperor and as a man of the people,[3] his is always a life that all human chances affect. Let us but listen to it: we say to ourselves every thing of which we have chief need. Is not the man who remembers having been very many times mistaken in his judgement a fool not to become forever after distrustful of it? When I find myself convicted by another's argument of holding a false opinion, I do not so much learn from what he says to me that is new, and about my ignorance in that special matter, — that would be little gain, — as I learn in general my weakness and the treachery of my understanding, whence I derive the reformation of the whole mass. In all my other errors I do likewise, and am conscious of great benefit to my life from this rule. I do not consider the species and the individual instance as a stone over which I have stumbled. I learn to suspect my steps, and trust to amend my manner of walking. (*c*) To learn that you have

[1] *Trop sophistiqué.* [2] In 1595: *Cicero.* [3] *Et emperiere et populaire.*

said or done a foolish thing is to learn only that; you must learn that you are nothing but a fool — knowledge much more ample and more important.

(*b*) The mistakes my memory has so often made, even when most certain of itself, are not idly wasted; in vain does it now swear to me and assure me — I shake my ears; the first opposition to its testimony throws me into suspense, and I should not dare to trust it about any thing important, or warrant it about the doings of another; and were it not that [I see nothing but lying and that] [1] what I do from lack of memory others do even oftener from lack of good faith, I should always, in matters of fact, take the truth from another's mouth rather than from my own. If every one should watch closely the mental effects and the circumstances of the passions which lord it over him, as I have done those of the one to which I am subject, he would see them coming and would abate their impetuosity and their force a little; they do not always seize us by the collar suddenly: there are threats, and degrees:

> Fluctus uti primo cœpit cum albescere vento,
> Paulatim sese tollit mare, et altius undas
> Erigit, inde imo consurgit ad æthera fundo.[2]

In me, judgement occupies a magisterial seat; at least it carefully endeavours to do so; it allows natural inclinations to take their course, both of hate and of friendship, yes, and that which I feel for myself, without being itself thereby changed and corrupted. If it can not reform the other parts to its mind, at least it does not allow itself to be deformed by them: it plays its game by itself.

The admonition to every man to know himself must have important results, since the god of knowledge and light [3] had it placed on the front of his temple as comprising all that he could counsel us. (*c*) Plato likewise says that wisdom is naught else but the following out of that injunction,[4]

[1] The words in brackets were omitted in 1595.

[2] As when the waves begin to whiten beneath the wind's first breath, and the sea rises little by little and lifts its surges higher, and then from the lowest depths rises to the stars. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VII, 528.

[3] Apollo. See Plutarch, *On the meaning of the word* El.

[4] See Plato, *Charmides*.

and Socrates, in Xenophon, confirms it in detail.[1] (*b*) The difficulties and obscurities in every branch of learning are perceived only by those who have entered therein; for it indeed requires some degree of intelligence to be able to notice that one does not know; and we must attempt to push open a door, to learn that it is closed to us. (*c*) From this is derived this platonic paradox: that neither those who have knowledge need to seek information, inasmuch as they have knowledge; nor those who have not knowledge, inasmuch as, in order to seek information, one must know what one seeks information about.[2] (*b*) And so, in the matter of knowing oneself, the fact that every one is seen to be so decided and satisfied about himself, and that every one thinks that he is sufficiently enlightened about himself, is a proof that no man is in the least enlightened about himself, (*c*) as Socrates teaches Euthydemus.[3]

(*b*) I, who practise no other profession, find in myself a depth and variety so infinite that the fruit of my learning only makes me feel how much I still have to learn. I owe to my weakness, so often acknowledged, my tendency to moderation, my obedience to beliefs prescribed to me, my constant coldness with regard to opinions, and my avoidance of extremes,[4] and my hatred of that troublesome and quarrelsome arrogance which believes wholly in itself and trusts in itself, the capital enemy of order and of truth. Do but hear them lord it: the first foolish things that they put forward they utter in the manner in which religion and laws are established. (*c*) *Nihil est turpius quam cognitioni et perceptioni assertionem approbationemque præcurrere.*[5] (*b*) Aristarchus said that in ancient times there were scarcely seven wise men in the world, and that in his day scarcely seven ignorant ones were to be found.[6] Have we not more reason than he to say this in our time? Assertion and obstinate per-

[1] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, IV, 2.24.

[2] See Plato, *Meno*.

[3] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, IV, 2.24 and 29.

[4] *Une constante froideur et moderation d'opinions.*

[5] Nothing is more shameful than that assertion and acquiescence should precede knowledge and comprehension. — Cicero, *Academica*, I, 13. The true reading is: *Neque hoc quidquam esse turpius*, etc.

[6] See Plutarch, *Of Brotherly Love.*

sistence in assertion are common signs of stupidity and ignorance. Let a man tumble on his nose a hundred times a day: he will be seen on his high horse, as determined and headstrong as before; you would say that there has been infused into him meanwhile some new spirit and force of understanding, and that it has been with him as of old with that son of the earth [1] who recovered his vigour and was strengthened by his fall;

Cui, cum tetigere parentem,
Jam defecta vigent renovato robore membra.[2]

Does not this stubborn blockhead think to take on a new wit when he takes up a new controversy? It is from my knowledge of myself that I cast reproach on human ignorance, which is, in my opinion, the most unfailing part of the school of the world. Those who will not infer it in themselves from so vain an example as mine or as their own, let them recognise it in Socrates, the master of masters; [3] (*c*) for the philosopher Antisthenes said to his disciples: "Let us go, you and me, and hearken to Socrates; there I shall be a learner with you"; and, maintaining thereby that dogma of the Stoic sect, that virtue was enough to make a life fully happy and in need of nothing else, he added, "Save of the force of Socrates." [4]

(*b*) The prolonged attention that I give to considering myself trains me to judge passably of others also; and there are few things of which I speak more happily and more excusably. It happens to me often to see and distinguish the conditions of my friends more accurately than they themselves do. I have astonished a man by the pertinence of my description and have warned him against himself. Having accustomed myself from my youth to behold my life exhibited in the lives of others, I have acquired a thoughtful nature in this; and, when I give my mind to it, I allow few things about me which may serve this purpose

[1] Antæus.

[2] Whose weakened limbs, when they have touched his mother, are strong with renewed vigour. — Lucan, IV, 599.

[3] The phrase replaces this of 1588: "the wisest man who ever lived, by the testimony of gods and men."

[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Antisthenes*.

to escape my notice: man's demeanour, humours, talk. I study every thing—what I should avoid, what I should imitate. Thus I discover in my friends, by their outward manifestations, their inward inclinations, not so as to arrange this infinite variety of actions, so diverse and unconnected, under certain kinds and heads, but so as clearly to distribute my apportionings and divisions into recognised classes and compartments;

> Sed neque quam multæ species, et nomina quæ sint,
> Est numerus.[1]

(*c*) Men of learning utter and indicate their ideas more specifically and in detail. I, who see in these matters only so much as custom, without order, acquaints me with about them, present my ideas in general terms and gropingly — as in this place. (*b*) I pronounce my judgement in desultory phrases; it is something that can not be said all at once and in its entirety. Connection and conformity are not found in such souls as ours, mean and commonplace. Wisdom is a solid and entire structure, of which every part has its station and bears its mark. (*c*) *Sola sapientia in se tota conversa est.*[2] (*b*) I leave it to artists — and I know not whether they will succeed in a matter so mixed up, so minute and fortuitous — to marshal in companies this infinite diversity of visages and to stay our mutability and bring order into it. Not only do I find it difficult to connect our actions one with another, but, each by itself, I find it difficult properly to designate it by some principal quality, so ambiguous and varicoloured are they in different lights. (*c*) What is noted as unusual in Perseus, the King of Macedonia, that his intelligence, limiting itself to no one condition, wandered through all kinds of life, exhibiting such flighty and erratic habits that neither by himself nor by any other man whatsoever was he to be known,[3] seems to me to be true of very nearly all men. And, beyond reach

[1] But it is impossible to count the number of their species, and to tell their names. — Virgil, *Georgics*, II, 103.

[2] Only wisdom is wholly complete in itself. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, III, 7.

[3] See Livy, XLI, 20. It has not previously been observed that Livy says this of Antiochus IV, King of Syria, not of Perseus.

of all, I have known another of the same type to whom I think that this description could be more fitly applied: no medium position, but forever throwing himself from one to the other extreme from unconjecturable causes; following no course without a cross-way, and wonderful contrariety; no simple force; so that the most probable conception that can be formed any day about him is that he was aiming and studying to make himself known by being unknowable.

(*b*) We need very good ears to hear ourselves judged of freely; and, since there are few who can stand it without being stung, they who venture to undertake it with us shew a peculiar effect of friendship for us; for it is to love soundly to undertake to wound and offend in order to benefit. I find it difficult to pass judgement on him in whom the bad qualities exceed the good ones. (*c*) Plato enjoins three qualities for him who desires to examine the soul of another: knowledge, good-will, boldness.[1]

(*b*) I have sometimes been asked what service I should have considered myself fit for if any one had thought to make use of me while I was of the suitable age, —

> Dum melior vires sanguis dabat, æmula necdum
> Temporibus geminis canebat sparsa senectus.[2]

"For no service," I replied; and I freely forgive myself for not being able to do any thing which enslaves me to another. But I would have told my master the truth about himself, and would have criticised his morals, had he so wished; not as a whole, by scholastic teachings, which I do not at all know and from which I do not see that there springs any genuine reformation in those who do know them; but by watching his character step by step, at every opportunity, and judging of it at sight, simply and naturally, part by part; shewing him what he is in common opinion, setting myself in opposition to his flatteries. There is no one of us who would not be of less worth than kings, were he thus constantly corrupted, as they are, by this rabble. What! even Alexander, so great both as king and as philosopher,

[1] See the *Gorgias*.

[2] Whilst better blood gave me strength, and old age had not yet sprinkled my temples with grey. — Virgil, *Æneid*, V, 415.

could not protect himself from them! I should have had enough fidelity and judgement and frankness for that. It would be a nameless office — otherwise it would fail of its effect and its seemliness; and it is a task which can not be played indifferently by all men; for even truth itself is not privileged to be employed at all times and in all ways; its use, wholly noble as it is, has its bounds and limits. It often happens, as the world is, that we utter it in the ear of a prince, not only fruitlessly, but harmfully, and even unjustly; and I can not be made to believe that a godly admonition may not be badly applied, and that the importance of the substance should not often yield to the importance of the form.

I would choose for this business a man satisfied with his station, —

Quod sit esse velit, nihilque malit,[1] —

and of medium station by birth; inasmuch as, on the one hand, he would not be afraid to touch his master's heart to the quick, dreading to lose the continuance of his advancement; and on the other hand, being of medium condition of life, he would have more easy intercourse with all sorts of people. (*c*) I should wish this position given to one man only; for to scatter the privilege of such freedom and intimacy among many would engender a harmful lack of reverence; yes, and from that one man I should exact, above all else, the fidelity of silence.

(*b*) A king is not to be believed when, for glory's sake, he boasts of his firmness in meeting the attack of his enemy, if, for his benefit and amendment, he can not suffer the freedom of a friend's words, which have no other purpose than to open his ears, the rest of their effect being in his own hands. Now there is no condition of men who have as great need as these of true and free admonitions. They lead a public life and have to conform to the ideas of so many onlookers that, as it is the custom to let them hear nothing to divert them from their path, they become unconsciously entangled in the hatred and detestation of their peoples,

[1] Who is willing to be what he is, and prefers nothing else. — Martial, X, 47.12. Montaigne has changed the person of the verbs: *sis . . . velis . . . malis.*

often from causes which they would have been able to avoid, even with no prejudice to their pleasures, if they had been warned and set right in time. Commonly their favourites consider themselves rather than their masters; and it is well for them that they do, inasmuch as, in truth, most offices of true friendship are, with regard to the sovereign, difficult and hazardous to attempt; so that there is need, not only of much affection and of frankness, but also of courage.[1]

In fine, all this medley which I scribble here is but a record of the essays of my life, which, for inward health, is a good enough example for instruction taken hindside foremost.[2] But as for bodily health, no one can furnish more useful experience than I, who present it in its purity, in no wise corrupted or altered by art and by theory.[3] Experience is rightly on its own dung-hill as regards medicine, about which reason leaves the whole field open to it. Tiberius said that whosoever had lived twenty years should answer to himself as to what things were harmful or salutary for him, and should guide himself without medicine.[4] (*c*) And he might have learned this from Socrates, who, carefully enjoining upon his disciples the study of their health as a very important study, added that it was easy for a man of intelligence, taking care about exercise and eating and drinking, to discern better than any physician what was good or bad for him.[5] (*b*) Indeed, medicine professes always to take experience as a test of its working; so that Plato had reason for saying that, to be truly a physician, it was requisite that he who undertook this office should have had all the maladies he proposed to cure, and should have passed through all the chances and conditions which he must judge.[6] It is well that they should themselves have the pox if they would know how to treat it.

[1] See Tacitus, *History*, I, 15.

[2] *Exemplaire assez à prendre l'instruction à contre-poil.*

[3] *Opination.*

[4] Montaigne seems to have misunderstood the passage in Tacitus (*Annals*, VI, 46), which says that Tiberius ridiculed those who after *thirty* years had need of advice about health.

[5] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, IV, 7.9.

[6] See Plato, *Republic*, book III.

Truly I would trust myself to such a one: for the others treat us as he does who, seated at his table, paints the sea, the reefs, and the harbours, and there, in all security, manœuvres the model of a ship; let him face the real thing, he knows not which way to turn. They describe our ills as a town crier does a lost horse or dog: of such a colour, such a size, and such ears; but put it before him, and he does not know it.

For God's sake, let medicine one day give me some good and perceptible assistance; see how sincerely I will cry out,

Tandem efficaci do manus scientiæ![1]

The arts which promise to keep the body in health and the soul in health promise us much; but withal there are none which keep their promises less. And in our day those amongst us who profess these arts shew less results thereof than any other men. We may say of them, at most, that they sell medicinal drugs; but that they are physicians, that we can not say [when we look at them and those who are governed by them].[2] I have lived long enough to think well of the mode of life which has carried me so far; for any one who would like to taste it, I have made trial of it; I am his taster.[3] Here are a few particulars, as memory may supply me with them. (*c*) I have no habits which have not varied according to circumstances, but I record those which I have seen most frequently in operation, which have had most possession of me to the present time.

(*b*) My manner of life is the same in sickness as in health: the same bed, the same hours, the same food, and the same drinks are of service to me. I add nothing at all save moderation as to the more or less, according to my strength and my appetite. Health for me means maintaining my wonted condition not turned from its course. I see that sickness makes me leave it in one direction; if I put trust in physicians, they will turn me out of it in another; and

[1] At last I salute a science that gives results. — Horace, *Epodes*, XVII, 1. *Tandem* is substituted for *Jam, jam* of the original.

[2] The words in brackets were omitted in 1595.

[3] *Eschanson:* the official whose duty it was to taste the food offered to a king or other great personage.

by fate and by art, there I am out of the right road. I believe nothing more confidently than this: that I can not be harmed by the use of things to which I have been so long accustomed. It is habit that gives such shape to our lives as it pleases; it is all in all there; it is the potion of Circe, which changes our nature as it deems best. How many nations, and our near neighbours, think absurd any fear of evening dampness which is so manifestly harmful to us! And our watermen and our peasants laugh at it. You make a German ill if you give him a mattress to sleep on, as an Italian with a feather-bed, and a Frenchman without bed-curtains and a fire. The stomach of a Spaniard can not bear eating what we eat, nor ours drinking what the Swiss drink. A German at Augusta [1] amused me by attacking the discomforts of our fireplaces on the same ground which we commonly make use of in condemnation of their stoves; for, in truth, that unaired heat and the smell of the overheated material of which they are made gives a headache to most people who are not accustomed to it — not to me. But after all, this heat, being even and constant and widespreading, without flame, without smoke, without the wind that because of the openness of our chimneys blows down on us, can in many other respects be favourably compared with ours. Why do we not copy the Roman architecture? For it is said that in ancient time fires were not made in the houses but outside them and below them; whence the heat was carried through the whole dwelling by pipes passed between the walls, which circled about the places that were to be warmed; which I have seen clearly described, I know not where, in Seneca.[2] This German, hearing me praise the agreeableness and beauties of his city, which certainly deserves it, began to commiserate me because I had to leave it; and among the first disagreeable things that he mentioned was the heaviness of head which the chimneys elsewhere would cause me. He had heard some one make this complaint and attached it to us, being unable, because he was accustomed to it, to detect it in his own house. All heat that comes from fire weakens and oppresses me; yet

[1] Augsburg: Augusta Vindelicorum.
[2] See *Epistle* 90.

Evenus said that fire was the best spice of life.[1] I choose any other way to escape cold.

We dislike wines near the bottom of the cask; in Portugal these lees are thought delicious and are the beverage of princes. In fine, each nation has many customs and usages which are not only unknown but appear barbarous and extraordinary to other nations. What shall we do with the people who accept only printed evidence, who do not believe men if they be not in a book, or the truth if it be not of due age? (*c*) We dignify our follies when we put them into type. (*b*) There is much more weight for such people if you say "I have read it," than if you say, "I have heard it said." But I, who no more disbelieve a man's mouth than his pen, and who know that men write as inconsiderately as they talk, and who think as highly of this age as I do of a bygone age, I quote a friend of mine as readily as I do Aulus Gellius or Macrobius, and what I have seen as what they have written. (*c*) And as it is held of virtue that it is no greater for being of long standing, so I believe of truth that it is none the wiser for being older. (*b*) I often say that it is pure foolishness that makes us run after foreign and scholastic examples; their abundance in these days is as in the times of Homer and Plato. But is it not that we seek the honour of the quotation more than the truth of the matter, as if it were nobler to borrow our proofs from the shop of Vascosan or Plantin than from what we see in our village? or really, in truth, that we have not the wit to examine and make the most of what happens before our eyes, and to judge it keenly enough to bring it forward as an example? for if we say that we lack authority to give weight to our testimony, we speak from the purpose; since, in my opinion, from the most commonplace things, and the most usual and familiar, if we can see them in the right light,[2] may be conceived the greatest miracles of nature and the most wonderful examples, particularly on the subject of human actions.

Now, as bearing upon my theme, putting aside the examples that I know of from books, (*c*) and what Aristotle says of Andron the Argian, that he crossed the arid sands

[1] See Plutarch, *Platonic Questions*.

[2] *Si nous sçavions trouver leur jour.*

of Libya without drinking,[1] (*b*) a gentleman who has acquitted himself worthily in many employments said, in my presence, that he had travelled from Madrid to Lisbon in the heat of summer without drinking. He is in vigorous health for his age, and there is nothing extraordinary in his habits of life but this — that he goes two or three months, even a year, so he told me, without drinking. He is sometimes thirsty, but he lets it pass and maintains that it is an appetite which easily weakens of itself; and he drinks more from whim than from need or for pleasure.

Here is another case. It is not long ago that I found one of the most learned men in France, among those of no mean fortune, studying in the corner of a room, shut off by hangings, and above him his servants in unrestrained uproar.[2] He told me, (*c*) and Seneca says almost the same of himself,[3] (*b*) that he profited by this racket, as if, battered by the noise, he withdrew his mind and confined himself the more within himself for contemplation, and that that storm of voices drove his thoughts inward. When a student at Padua, his study was for so long a time near the clatter of coaches and the tumult of the market-place, that he trained himself not only to despise noise, but to make use of it for the service of his studies. (*c*) Socrates replied to Alcibiades, when he wondered how he could endure the constant noisiness of his wife's obstinacy, "As those do who are accustomed to the common sound of wheels drawing water."[4] (*b*) I am quite the opposite: my mind is sensitive and quick to take flight; when it is engaged with itself, the least buzzing of a fly is death to it.

(*c*) In his youth Seneca was so bitten, after the example of Sextius, with the idea of eating nothing that had not been killed,[5] that he went without that sort of food for a year, with pleasure, as he says, and renounced the habit only to avoid being suspected of borrowing this rule from certain new religions which disseminated it. He adopted at the same time the injunctions of Attalus, not to lie on mattresses

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Pyrrho*.
[2] *Un tabut de ses valets plain de licence.*
[3] See *Epistle* 56.
[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Socrates*.
[5] That is, that had died of disease. See Seneca, *Epistle* 108.

into which the body sinks, and till his old age he used those which do not yield to the body;[1] what the habit of his time caused to be considered austerity in him, our time regards as effeminacy.

(*b*) Consider the difference between the manner of life of my farm-servants and my own; the Scythians and Indians are no further removed from my ability and my habit. I know that I have withdrawn children from begging, to enter my service, who very soon after have forsaken me and my kitchen and my livery, simply to return to their former life; and I found one of them afterward collecting mussels from the garbage-heap for his dinner, whom neither by prayers nor by threats could I divert from the relish and pleasure that he found in indigence. Beggars have their nobleness and their delights like the rich, and, it is said, their dignities and political orders. The effect of wontedness can make acceptable to us, not only such manner of life as it pleases (but the wise say that we must fix our minds on the best, which custom will forthwith make easy for us[2]), but also change and variation, which is the noblest and most useful of its teachings. The best of my bodily dispositions is that I am flexible and far from opinionative; I have some inclinations more personal and ordinary and more agreeable than others; but with very little effort I turn away from them and slip easily into a contrary course. A young man should break in upon his rules, to arouse his energy and keep it from becoming flavourless and inert; and there is no course of life so foolish and feeble as that which is guided by rules and discipline.

> Ad primum lapidem vectari cum placet, hora
> Sumitur ex libro; si prurit frictus ocelli
> Angulus, inspecta genesi collyria quærit.[3]

If he trusts my advice, he will often plunge even into excesses; otherwise the slightest over-indulgence undoes him; he becomes tiresome and disagreeable in social relations.

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 108. [2] See Plutarch, *Of Banishment.*

[3] When it pleases him to ride to the first mile-stone, he chooses the hour from a book; if he has rubbed the corner of his eye, and it itches, he seeks a remedy only after he has consulted his horoscope. — Juvenal, VI, 576.

The quality least befitting a well-bred man is fastidiousness and being bound to a particular way; it is particular if it be not pliable and yielding. It is humiliating to fail to do from lack of ability, or not to dare to do, what you see your comrades do. Let such men stay in their kitchen. In all other men it is unseemly; but in a man-at-arms it is vicious and intolerable; for he, as Philopœmen was wont to say, should accustom himself to every diversity and inequality of life.[1]

Although I have been fashioned as much as possible to liberty and indifference, yet so it is that, as I grow old, having from heedlessness become fixed in certain ways (my age is beyond instruction and has henceforth nothing to consider save to uphold itself), habit has now unconsciously so stamped its impress on me in certain matters that I call deviation from it excess; and I can not without an effort either sleep in the daytime, or take any thing between meals, or eat breakfast, or go to bed until a long time, (*c*) say three hours, (*b*) after supper, ny faire des enfans qu'avant le sommeil, ny les faire debout, or remain sweaty, or quench my thirst with water alone or wine alone, or remain long bare-headed, or have my hair cut after dinner; and I should do without my gloves with as much discomfort as without my shirt, and without washing on leaving the table and on rising, and without a canopy and curtains to my bed, as being very necessary things. I could dine without a cloth; but very uncomfortably without white napkins, as the Germans do; I soil them more than they and the Italians do, and make little use of spoon and fork. I regret that we have not followed a custom that I have seen introduced after the example of kings: that napkins be changed with each course, as plates are. We know of that hard-working soldier Marius that, as he grew old, he became so fastidious about his way of drinking that he would drink only from a special cup of his own.[2] China and silver cups I dislike in comparison with glass.[3] (*c*) For my part, I allow myself to

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Philopœmen*. It was not he who said it, but some men whom he was questioning.

[2] See Idem, *How to restrain anger*.

[3] This sentence was omitted in 1595.

take a fancy even to a certain shape of glasses, and do not willingly drink from a common glass any more than from a common hand; any metal cup I dislike in comparison with a clear and transparent material; let my eyes taste also according to their capacity.

(*b*) I owe many such niceties to habit. Nature has also, on the other hand, brought me hers: as the not being able to tolerate two full meals a day without overloading my stomach; or entire absence from one of the meals without being filled with wind, my mouth being dry, and my appetite dull; the being harmed by long exposure to night air; for in recent years when, in military service, fatigue duty lasts all night, as commonly happens, after five or six hours my stomach begins to trouble me, together with a violent headache, and I can not go to daybreak without vomiting. When others go off to breakfast I go away to sleep, and after that I am as lively as before. I had always understood that the dew did not fall except in the evening; but having, of late years, known familiarly and for a long time a gentleman who is imbued with the belief that the dew is heavier and more dangerous when the sun is sinking, an hour or two before it sets, when he carefully avoids it, and makes no account of the night dew, he has almost persuaded me, not so much by his talk as by his feelings.

How is it? Does mere doubt and enquiry strike our imagination and change us? They who wholly yield to these inclinations draw upon themselves complete ruin, and I am sorry for many a gentleman who, through the folly of his physician, has imprisoned himself [1] while he was still young and sound. It would be much more worth while to suffer from a cold than to lose forever, by unfamiliarity, the intercourse of common life, a matter of such frequent occurrence. (*c*) That is a vexatious sort of learning which discredits the pleasantest hours of the day. (*b*) Let us lengthen our hold in every possible way; for the most part we become enured to the matter by persistence, and rectify our nature, as Cæsar did the falling sickness, by dint of scorning and bribing it.[2] We should devote ourselves to the best rules, but not be enslaved by them; for it is not these, if

[1] *Se sont mis en chartre.* [2] See Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar.*

there are any, to which to be in bondage and servitude is profitable.

Et les roys et les philosophes fientent, et les dames aussi; les vies publiques se doivent à la ceremonie, la mienne, obscure et privée, jouit de toute dispence naturelle; soldat et Gascon sont qualitez aussi un peu subjettes à l'indiscretion. Parquoy je dirai ceci de cette action, qu'il est besoing de la renvoyer à certaines heures prescriptes et nocturnes, et s'y forcer par coustume et assubjectir, comme j'ay faict, mais non s'assubjectir, comme j'ay faict en vieillissant, au soing de particuliere commodité de lieu et de siege pour ce service, et le rendre empeschant par longueur et mollesse; toutesfois, aux plus sales offices, est il pas aucunement excusable de requerir plus de soing et de netteté? (*c*) *Natura homo mundum et elegans animal est!*[1] De toutes les actions naturelles c'est celle que je souffre plus mal volontiers m'estre interrompue. (*b*) J'ay veu beaucoup de gens de guerre incommodez du desreiglement de leur ventre; tandis que le mien et moy ne nous faillions jamais au poinct de nostre assignation, qui est au saut du lict, si quelque violente occupation ou maladie ne nous trouble.

So, as I was saying, my opinion is that those who are sick can not better find safety than by keeping quietly on in the course of life in which they have been bred and brought up; change, whatever it may be, causes trouble and injury. It is not to be believed[2] that chestnuts are injurious to a native of Perigord or of Lucca, and milk and cheese to mountain-dwellers. They are ordered a mode of life, not only new, but opposed to their accustomed one; a change which a man in health could not stand. Prescribe water for a seventy-year-old Breton; confine a seaman in a heated room; forbid walking to a Basque footman; they are deprived of motion and, at last, of air and light.

An vivere tanti est? . . .
Cogimur a suetis animum suspendere rebus,
Atque ut vivamus vivere desinimus.

[1] Man is by nature a cleanly and fastidious animal. — Seneca, *Epistle* 92.

[2] *Allez croire.*

Hos superesse reor quibus et spirabilis aer,
Et lux qua regimur redditur ipsa gravis? [1]

If such measures do no other good, they do at least this: they prepare the patients for death in good season, by sapping their life little by little and narrowing their use of it.

Both in health and in sickness I readily let myself go according to those appetites that are insistent. I give great authority to my desires and inclinations. I do not like to cure an ill by an ill; I hate remedies that are more disturbing than the disease. To be under subjection to the colic and under subjection to abstinence from the pleasure of eating oysters are to me two ills; the malady nips us in one direction, the regimen in another. Since we are in danger of disappointment, let us risk it rather in pursuit of pleasure. The world does the opposite, and thinks nothing profitable which is not painful; it is suspicious of facility. My appetite, fortunately enough, has in many things accommodated and adjusted itself of its own accord to the health of my stomach; the pungency and piquancy of sauces was agreeable to me when I was young; later, my stomach becoming tired of them, my taste forthwith followed suit. (*c*) Wine is harmful for the sick; it is the first thing for which my mouth feels distaste — an invincible distaste. (*b*) Whatever I take that is disagreeable to me harms me, and nothing harms me that I take hungrily and gladly. I have never been harmed by doing what was truly agreeable to me; and indeed I have made medical opinion give way very largely to my pleasure; et me suis, jeune, —

Quem circumcursans huc atque huc sæpe Cupido,
Fulgebat crocina splendidus in tunica, [2] —

presté, autant licentieusement et inconsideréement qu'autre, au desir qui me tenoit saisi;

Et militavi non sine gloria, [3] —

plus toutesfois en continuation et en durée qu'en saillie.

[1] Is it so important to live? . . . We are compelled to deprive our minds of things to which we are accustomed, and, in order to live, we cease to live. Shall I regard those as living, for whom the air that we breathe and the very light by which we are guided are made oppressive? — Maximianus (Pseudo-Gallus), I, 155, 247.

[2] Catullus, LXVI, 133.

[3] Horace, *Odes*, III, 26.2.

Sex me vix memini sustinuisse vices.[1]

Il y a du malheur, certes, et du miracle à confesser en quelque foiblesse d'ans je me rencontray premierement en sa subjection. Ce fut bien rencontre, car ce fut long temps avant l'age de choix et de cognoissance; il ne me souvient point de moy de si loing; et peut on marier ma fortune à celle de Quartilla, qui n'avoit point memoire de son fillage:[2]

Inde tragus, celeresque pili, mirandaque matri
Barba meæ.[3]

Les medecins ploient ordinairement avec utilité leurs regles à la violence des envies aspres qui surviennent aux malades. Ce grand desir ne se peut imaginer si estranger et vicieux que nature ne s'y applique. Et puis, combien est-ce de contenter la fantasie? A mon opinion, cette piece là importe de tout, aumoins au delà de toute autre. Les plus griefs et ordinaires maux sont ceux que la fantasie nous charge. Ce mot espagnol me plaist à plusieurs visages: *Defienda me, Dios, de my*.[4] Je plains, estant malade, de quoy je n'ay quelque desir qui me donne ce contentement de l'assouvir; à peine m'en destourneroit la medecine. Autant en fay-je sain, je ne vois guere plus qu'esperer et vouloir. C'est pitié d'estre alanguy et affoibly jusques au souhaiter.

The science of medicine is not so established that we are without authority, whatever we may do; it changes according to the climate and according to the moon's phases, according to Farnel [5] and according to l'Escale.[6] If your physician does not think it wise for you to sleep, to take wine, or such and such meat, do not be troubled, I will find you another who will not be of his opinion; the diversity of medical arguments and opinions includes every variety of form. I saw a wretched sick man, half-dying, and fainting with intolerable thirst, in the hope of a cure; and he was laughed at later by another physician who condemned this advice as harmful. Had he not made good use of his pain? There died lately of the stone a man of this profession, who

[1] Ovid, *Amores*, III, 7.26.
[2] See Petronius, *Satiricon*, XXV.
[3] Martial, XI, 22.7.
[4] O God, defend me from myself!
[5] Physician to Henri II of France.
[6] That is, J. C. Scaliger, of Padua.

had resorted to extreme abstinence to withstand his malady; his associates say that that fasting, on the contrary, had drained his body and hardened the gravel in his kidney.

I have observed when I have been wounded [1] or ill, that talking stirs and harms me as much as any disturbance does. Using my voice costs me dear and wearies me; for it is loud and vigorous, so that, when I have had to talk privately of affairs of importance, with great men, I have often given them the trouble to tell me to speak low.

This story deserves that I should interrupt myself. Some one in a certain Greek school was talking loudly, as I do. The master of ceremonies sent to him to speak lower. "Let him send me," he replied, "the tone in which he wishes me to speak." The other answered that he should take his tone from the ears of him to whom he spoke.[2] That was well said, provided this be understood: "Speak according to what your business is with your listener"; for if it means, "Let it suffice you that he hears you," or "Regulate yourself by him," I do not find it reasonable. The voice, by its tone and action, conveys some expression and signification of my meaning; it is for me to govern it as representing me. There is a voice for instruction, a voice for flattery or for reprimandment. I would have my voice not only reach my listener, but perchance strike him and pierce him through. When I berate my servant in a harsh and cutting tone, it would be well for him to say to me, "Speak more softly, master, I hear you plainly." (*c*) *Est quædam vox ad auditum accommodata non magnitudine, sed proprietate.*[3] (*b*) The uttered word pertains half to him who speaks, half to him who hears. The latter should prepare to receive it in the direction of its impulse; as, with those playing tennis, he who receives the ball shifts his place and makes ready for it according as he sees him move who makes the stroke, and according to the nature of the stroke.[4]

[1] This is the only suggestion that Montaigne was ever wounded, but it seems to come in naturally enough here, where he speaks of himself as *soldat et Gascon.*

[2] See Plutarch, *Of Garrulity;* Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Carneades.*

[3] There is a certain sort of voice adapted to the hearing, not so much by its volume, as by its suitableness. — Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, XI, 3.

[4] See Plutarch, *Of Hearing.*

Experience has taught me this also: that we ruin ourselves by impatience. Evils have their lifetime and their limits, (*c*) their maladies and their health. The constitution of maladies is shaped on the same pattern as the constitution of animals; their destiny and their length of days are allotted to them from their birth. He who tries imperiously to shorten them by force, by crossing their course, prolongs and multiplies them, and irritates instead of assuaging them.[1] I am of Crantor's opinion,[2] that we ought not obstinately to resist evils in reckless fashion, or to succumb to them from want of vigour, but that we should naturally yield to them according to their character and our own. (*b*) We should give free passage to maladies; and I find that they tarry less long with me, who let them do as they will; and some of those which are deemed most obstinate and tenacious have left me, by their own subsidence, without the help of medicine and against its rules. Let us leave a little for Nature to do, who understands her affairs better than we. "But that man died of it." So will you die, if not of that disease, of another; and how many have not escaped death from it with three doctors by their side!

Example is a dim looking-glass, all-containing and with many meanings.[3] If the medicine be a pleasant one, take it; it is always so much present pleasure. (*c*) I shall not be stayed either by its name or its colour if it be delicious and appetising; pleasure is one of the chief kinds of profit. (*b*) I have allowed to grow old and die a natural death within me, colds and gouty tendencies,[4] relaxation of the bowels, palpitations of the heart, sick headaches, and other mischances, which have left me when I had half enured myself to entertaining them. One can exorcise them better by courtesy than by defiance. We must patiently endure the laws of our condition; we have to grow old, to become feeble, to be ill, in spite of all medicine. That is the first teaching that the Mexicans give their children when, as they come forth from the mother's womb, they greet them thus: "Child, you have come into the world to endure; endure, suffer, and be silent."

[1] See Plato, *Timæus*.
[2] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, III, 6.
[3] *Universel et à tout sens.*
[4] *Defluxions.*

It is not just to complain because that has happened to some one which may happen to every one. (*c*) *Indignare si quid in te inique proprie constitutum est.*[1] (*b*) Behold an old man who asked God to keep him in perfect and vigorous health, that is to say, to bring back his youth:

Stulte, quid hæc frustra votis puerilibus optas?[2]

Is it not folly? His state does not comport with it. (*c*) Gout, the stone, indigestion, are signs of long years, as heat, rain, and winds are of long journeys. Plato does not believe that Æsculapius would take the trouble to provide by rules for prolonging life in a wasted and feeble body, useless for his country, useless for his occupation, and for begetting sound and robust children; and he does not deem such care compatible with the divine justice and wisdom which guides all things toward usefulness.[3] (*b*) My good friend, all is at an end; you can not be put to rights; at most you can be plastered over and propped up a bit, (*c*) and it will prolong your wretchedness by some few hours.

(*b*) Non secus instantem cupiens fulcire ruinam,
Diversis contra nititur objicibus,
Donec certa dies, omni compage soluta,
Ipsum cum rebus subruat auxilium.[4]

We must learn to suffer what can not be avoided. Our life, like the harmony of the world, is composed of contrary things, also of diverse tones, sweet and harsh, keen and dull, soft and solemn. If a musician should like only some of them, what would it mean? It is necessary for him to know how to employ them all in common, and blend them; and so must we the goods and the ills which are consubstantial with our life.[5] Our existence can not subsist with-

[1] Be indignant if any thing unjust is decreed against you alone. — Seneca, *Epistle* 91.

[2] Fool, why do you vainly ask for these things in your childish prayers? — Ovid, *Tristia*, III, 8.11.

[3] See Plato, *Republic*, book III.

[4] Not otherwise does he who wishes to support a building about to fall place various props against it, until the fatal day when the whole structure falls apart, and drags down the props with the rest. — Maximianus (Pseudo-Gallus), I, 171.

[5] See Plutarch, *Of the tranquillity of the mind.*

out this commixture, and one set of elements is not less essential than the other. To attempt to kick against natural necessity is to shew like folly with Ctesiphon, who undertook by kicking to deal with his mule.[1]

I seldom seek advice about the changes for the worse that I feel, for men of this kind are presumptuous when they have you at their mercy; they stuff your ears with their prognostications; and once, surprising me unawares when weakened by illness, they treated me harmfully with their dogmatism and their magisterial phiz, at one time threatening me with severe pains, and again, with approaching death. I was neither cast down nor moved from my position by this, but I was jostled and pushed; if my judgement was neither changed nor disturbed, at least it was embarrassed; there is always agitation and strife.

Now, I treat my imagination as gently as I can, and would relieve it if I could from all difficulty and contest. It must be helped and flattered, and deceived when possible. My mind is fit for this office; it finds no lack of specious evidence on all sides. Could it persuade what it preaches, it would help me happily. Will you have an example? It says that it is for my good that I have the stone; that buildings of my age naturally have to suffer some leakage (the time comes when they begin to open at the joints, and are unlike themselves;[2] it is a common necessity, and no unusual miracle would be performed for me; I pay in this way the dues of old age, and I could not do so more cheaply); [it says] that the companionship I have should console me, I having met with the most ordinary mischance of the men of my day (I see them everywhere afflicted by the same sort of malady, and association with them does me honour, inasmuch as this malady readily attacks the great; it is essentially noble and dignified); [it says] that of the men who are stricken with it there are few who get off with better terms, since it costs them the discomfort of an unpleasant course of treatment and the annoyance of taking medicinal drugs every day, whereas I owe improvement solely to my good-fortune; for some common broths of eringa[3] or Turk's

[1] See Plutarch, *How to restrain anger.*

[2] *Il est temps qu'ils commencent à se lascher et desmentir.*

[3] Saxifrage.

herb, which I have taken two or three times as a compliment to ladies who, more sweetly than my malady is bitter, have presented me with half of theirs, have seemed to me equally easy to take and worthless in effect. Other men have to pay a thousand vows to Æsculapius and as many crowns to their physician for an easy and abundant discharge of gravel, which I frequently obtain by the favour of nature. (*c*) Even the decorum of my bearing in company is not disturbed by this, and I hold my water ten hours and as long as a healthy man.

(*b*) "The dread of this malady," it says, "used to terrify thee formerly when it was unknown to thee.[1] The outcries and despair of those who aggravate it by their impatience engendered horror of it in thee. It is a malady that affects the organs with which thou hast most transgressed. Thou art a conscientious man;

Quæ venit indigne pœna dolenda venit;[2]

consider this chastisement; it is very mild compared with others, and of a paternal kindness; consider the lateness of its coming; it incommodes and occupies only that season of thy life which, in any case, is already ruined and sterile, having given room to the excesses and pleasures of thy youth, as by mutual agreement. The fear of this malady, and the compassion for it that the people feel, serve thee as occasion for pride — a quality which, although thou hast purged thy judgement of it and hast cured thy conversation of it, thy friends can still recognise some trace of in thy nature. It is pleasant to hear it said of oneself: 'There is strength for you! there is patience!' Thou art seen sweating with the effort, turning pale, flushing, trembling, vomiting even to blood, suffering strange contractions and convulsions, dropping at times great tears from thine eyes, discharging a thick, black, alarming urine, or having it stopped by a sharp rough-edged stone, which cruelly tears and stings the neck of the penis; talking meanwhile with those present, with thy usual countenance, jesting at moments with

[1] Cf. Book II, chap. 37 (Vol. III, p. 194).

[2] The undeserved hardship is the one to be lamented. — Ovid, *Heroïdes*, V, 8.

ladies,[1] taking thy share in serious talk, making excuses for thy suffering, and belittling thy endurance. Dost thou remember those men of bygone times who hungrily sought out ills, to keep their courage in breath and exercise? Assume that Nature carries and casts thee into this glorious school, which thou wouldst never have entered of thine own free will. If thou dost tell me that this is a dangerous and deadly malady, what others are not so? For it is a medical deception to except some maladies which they say do not lead straight to death: what does it matter whether they go thither by accident, or whether they slide and slip easily into the path that leads to it? (*c*) But thou diest not because thou art sick, thou diest because thou art living;[2] death kills thee without the aid of sickness, and for some persons sicknesses have kept death away; they have lived the longer because it seemed to them that they were about to die; moreover, as with wounds, there are diseases also that are medicinal and salutary.

(*b*) "Colic often has no less long a life than we; there are men with whom it has continued from their childhood to their extreme old age; and had they not left its company, it was ready to attend them further; thou dost kill it oftener than it kills thee. And if it should put before thee the image of near-by death, would it not be doing a good office to a man so old, to turn him to meditation upon his end? (*c*) And, what is more, thou no longer hast any reason for recovery; whether or no, very soon the necessity common to all will summon thee. (*b*) Consider how skilfully and gently it disgusts thee with life and loosens thy hold upon the world, not compelling thee by its tyrannical subjection, — like so many other ill conditions that are seen in old men, which keep them continually and without remission enchained by weaknesses and pains, — but it instructs thee by warnings resumed at intervals, intermingling with them long pauses and respites, as if to give thee opportunity to meditate and to rehearse its lesson at thine ease. To give thee opportunity to judge aright, and to be resolved like a brave man,

[1] *Raillant à pauses avec les dames* (1588); changed in 1595 to: *bouffonant à pauses avec tes gens.*

[2] See Seneca, *Epistle* 78.

it puts before thee the state of thy whole condition as regards both good and ill, and, in one and the same day, a life sometimes very cheerful and sometimes unendurable. If thou dost not embrace death, at least thou dost touch her hand once a month; (*c*) whence thou mayst the more hope that she will one day surprise thee without warning, and that, being so often led even to the place of embarkation, confident that thou art still on the accustomed terms, some morning thou and thy confidence will be unexpectedly carried across the water. (*b*) One has no reason to complain of maladies that fairly divide the time with health."

I am grateful to fortune in that it assails me so often with the same kind of weapons; it shapes me to them and trains me to them by custom, enures and habituates me to them. I know now very nearly how much it will cost me to be rid of them.[1] (*c*) In default of natural memory, I create one of paper; and when some new symptom appears in my disease, I note it down; whence it happens that at this day, having passed through almost every sort of experience, if something surprising threatens me, by turning over these little loose records, like Sibylline leaves, I do not fail to find in my past experience some favourable prognostic to console me. (*b*) Wontedness also helps me to hope better things of the future; for this action of clearing out having so long continued, it is to be believed that nature will not change this course, and that no worse condition will result from it than what I now endure. Moreover, the character of this disease is not ill suited to my quick and unanticipating[2] disposition. When it attacks me mildly, it frightens me, for it is to stay long; but by its nature it has vigorous and spirited excesses; it shakes me to the utmost for a day or two. My kidneys lasted for forty years without impairment; it is almost fourteen years since their condition changed.[3] Evils as well as goods have their period. Perchance this misfortune is near its end. Age diminishes the heat of my stomach; its digestion being therefore less perfect, it sends this crude matter to my kidneys; why may

[1] *En quoy j'en doibs estre quitte.* [2] *Prompte et soudaine.*

[3] This is the reading of 1588; in 1595, forty years was changed to *un aage*, and fourteen years to *un autre* [*aage*].

not, in like manner, the heat of my kidneys be diminished in turn so that they may no longer solidify my phlegm, and nature may set about finding some other channel of purgation? Years have evidently drained from me some discharges; why not these excrements which furnish material for the gravel?

But is any ecstasy comparable to that sudden change, when, from extreme pain, I pass with lightning speed, by the voiding of my stone, to the beautiful light of health, free and full, as comes to pass in our sudden and most severe attacks of colic? Is there aught in the pain endured that is a counterpoise to the pleasure of so sudden an amendment? How much more beautiful health appears to me after sickness, so near, so in actual contact, that I can recognise them in each other's presence, in their fullest equipment, in which they array themselves emulously, as if to oppose and thwart each the other. Quite as the Stoics say, that the vices are introduced with profit to give value and support to virtue,[1] so we may say, with better reason and less bold conjecture, that nature has given us pain for the honour and service of pleasure and comfort. When Socrates, after his fetters had been removed, felt a delicate enjoyment from the itching which their weight had caused in his legs, he took pleasure in considering the close alliance between pain and pleasure, how they are associated in an inevitable union, so that in turn they follow and engender each other; and he exclaimed that the excellent Æsop might have derived from this consideration a fit subject for a fine fable.[2]

The worst that I see about other diseases is that they are not so serious in their immediate effect as they are in their result; one is a year in recovering, all the while full of weakness and dread; there is so much chance and so many degrees in getting back to safety, that there is no end to it. Before you have been unmuffled, first from an outer cap and then from your skull-cap, before fresh air has been allowed you, and wine and your wife and melons, it is great luck if you have not relapsed into some new misery. This disease

[1] See Plutarch, *Common conceptions against the Stoics.*
[2] See Plato, *Phædo.*

has this privilege, that it carries itself clean off, whereas the others always leave behind some impress or change which renders the body susceptible to new ills, and lend a hand one to another. Those diseases are excusable which content themselves with their possession of us, without extending it and without introducing their after effects; but courteous and gracious are those whose passing brings us some profitable consequence. Since I have had the colic, I find myself more free from other symptoms of trouble, it seems to me, than I was before; and I have had no fever since then. I infer that my severe and frequent vomitings purge me, and also that my loss of appetite and the singular fasts I keep, digest my peccant humours, and that nature discharges in these stones what is superfluous and harmful. Do not tell me that it is a medicine too dearly bought; what about the many evil-smelling potions, cauterisings, incisions, sudorifics, setons, dietings, and so many methods of cure which often bring death to us because we can not sustain their violence and unseasonableness! Therefore, when I am attacked, I take it as medicine; when I am exempt, I take it as a lasting and complete deliverance.

Here is still another act of grace on the part of my disease, and one peculiar to it, namely, that it almost plays its game by itself and lets me play mine, or it holds on only from lack of courage on my part; when at its worst, I have kept on horseback for ten hours. Simply suffer; you have not to follow any other treatment; play at any game, dine, run, do this and also do that if you can, your diversion will be more serviceable than harmful. Say as much to one who has smallpox, or gout, or a rupture. Other maladies are more universally obligatory; they constrain our actions much more, disturb our whole system, and involve in consideration of them the whole condition of life. This one simply pinches the skin; it leaves your understanding and your will at your disposal, and your tongue and feet and hands; it arouses you rather than stupefies you. The mind is smitten by a burning fever, and overthrown by an epilepsy, and put out of joint by a severe headache, and in fine paralysed by all maladies which injure the whole body and its nobler organs. By this disease the mind is not at-

tacked; if things go wrong with her, hers be the blame; she betrays herself, abandons herself, and disables herself. It is only fools who allow themselves to be persuaded that this hard and solid substance which is concocted in our kidneys can be dissolved by potions; and so, when it stirs, there is nothing to do but give it passage; for that matter, it will take it.

I observe also this special convenience in this disease — that it is one about which we have little to guess at; we are dispensed from the disturbance which other maladies cause us from uncertainty as to their origin and conditions and progress — an infinitely painful disturbance. We have no need of doctoral consultation and interpretation; our sensations tell us both what it is and where it is. By such arguments, both strong and weak, I try, as Cicero did with the malady of old age,[1] to lull to sleep and divert my imagination, and to anoint its sores. If they are worse to-morrow, to-morrow we will provide other shifts.

(*c*) Let this be true: suppose that still again the slightest motion forces pure blood from my kidneys. What of that? I cease not to move about as before and to ride after my hounds with youthful ardour and pride; and I consider that I have complete mastery over so important a matter when it costs me no more than a dull heaviness and discomfort in that region; it is some large stone which presses upon and uses up the substance of my kidneys, and my life, and which I expel by slow degrees, not without some natural pleasurable sensation, as an excrement henceforth superfluous and troublesome. (*b*) Now, if I feel something giving way, do not expect me to busy myself in examining my pulse and my urine to derive from them some unpleasant anticipation; I shall feel the evil quickly enough without prolonging it by the evil of fear. (*c*) He who dreads suffering already suffers what he dreads; added to which, the dubitation and ignorance of those who take upon them to explain the means of Nature and her internal progressions, and the many false prognostics of their art, should make us understand that her methods are utterly unknown; there is great uncertainty, variety, and obscurity as to what she promises

[1] See Cicero, *De Senectute*.

or threatens. Save old age, which is an indubitable sign of the approach of death, I see in all other happenings few signs of the future upon which we can base our divination.

(*b*) I judge myself only by real sensation, not by reasoning. What would be the use, since I desire to bring to the situation nothing save expectation and patience? Would you know how much I gain by that? Look at those who do otherwise and who rely upon so many different persuasions and counsels; how often the imagination without the body [1] makes them suffer! Many a time, when in safety and free from these dangerous mishaps, I have found pleasure in describing them to physicians as then coming upon me; I have sustained the verdict of their terrible conclusions quite at my ease, and thereafter remained so much the more beholden to God for his favour, and better informed as to the worthlessness of that profession.

There is nothing that should be so enjoined upon the young as activity and alertness; our life is only in movement. I bestir myself with difficulty and am slow in every thing: in rising, in going to bed, at my meals; seven o'clock is early for me, and where I rule, I neither dine before eleven nor sup till after six. I formerly attributed the cause of the fevers and sicknesses that I fell into to the heaviness and indolence that long sleep had brought upon me; and I have always repented going to sleep again after waking in the morning. (*c*) Plato condemns excess in sleeping more than excess in drinking.[2] (*b*) I like to sleep on a hard bed and alone, yes, without a woman, in kingly fashion, rather well covered. My bed is never warmed, but since I have grown old I am given, when I need them, cloths to keep my feet and my stomach warm. They found fault with Scipio the Great for sleeping too much, in my opinion, for no other reason than that it vexed them that there was nothing else to find fault with in him.[3] If I am particular about any thing in my habits, it is rather about the kind of bed than aught else; but I accommodate myself in general to necessity as well as any other man. Sleep has filled a large part

[1] That is, when the body is sound.

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato;* Plato, *Laws*, book VII.

[3] See Plutarch, *Political Precepts*, and *That a prince should be a scholar.*

of my life, and I continue at my present age to sleep eight or nine hours together. I sometimes abandon with profit this slothful propensity, and am evidently the better for doing so; I feel somewhat the effort of the change, but it is over in three days. And I see few men who can live with less sleep when need is, or who are more constantly in motion, or to whom fatigue-duty [1] is less burdensome. My body is capable of steady activity, but not of an impetuous and sudden kind. I avoid nowadays violent exercises which make me sweat; my limbs become tired before they become warm. I can stand on my feet all day long, and walking is not irksome to me; but from my early youth I have never liked to go through city streets [2] except in the saddle; on foot I muddy myself to the thighs, and small men are likely to be jostled and elbowed because their appearance does not attract attention; [3] and I like to rest, whether lying or sitting, with my legs as high as my seat, or higher.

There is no employment so agreeable as that of a soldier, an employment both noble in performance, — for the most powerful, most generous, and proudest of all virtues is valour, — and noble in its source; there is no form of usefulness more righteous or more unlimited than the protection of the repose and grandeur of one's country. The companionship of so many men, noble, young, active, gives you pleasure, as do the frequent sight of so many terrible spectacles; the freedom of that natural intercourse and a virile and unceremonious mode of life; the variety of innumerable differing actions; the brave harmony of martial music that supports you and excites alike the ear and the soul; the honour of this employment, even its severity and its difficulty, (*c*) which Plato regards so little that in his *Republic* he gives a share in it to women and children.[4]

(*b*) You summon yourself, a volunteer, to special duties and risks, according as you judge their brilliancy and importance, and you see when life itself is pardonably employed therein, —

[1] *Les corvées.*
[2] *Sur le pavé.*
[3] *A faute d'apparence.*
[4] See the *Republic*, book V.

Pulchrumque mori succurrit in armis.[1]

To fear the common risks that concern so great a multitude, and not to dare what is dared by so many kinds of souls, and a whole people, is for a mean heart, debased beyond measure. Companionship gives steadiness even to children. If others surpass you in learning, in charm, in strength, in fortune, you can blame outside causes for it; but to be inferior to them in stoutness of soul — for that you have only yourself to blame. Death is more abject, more dull and disagreeable, in a bed than when fighting; fevers and apoplexies are as painful and deadly as a musket-shot. Whosoever would be able to bear valiantly the mischances of ordinary life would not have to increase his courage on becoming a soldier. (*c*) *Vivere, mi Lucili, militare est.*[2]

I do not recall ever having had an irritated skin; scratching is truly the pleasantest of natural gratifications and nearest at hand; but repentance for it is too troublesomely close. I use it most for my ears, which have attacks of itching inside.

(*b*) I was born with all my senses sound almost to perfection. My stomach is comfortably good, as is my head, and generally they remain so, and so does my breathing, through my attacks of fever. I have passed the age which some nations, not without reason, fixed as being so justly the limit of life that they did not allow it to be exceeded; yet do I still have times of revival, although uncertain and brief, so complete that there is little lacking of the health and painlessness of my youth. I say nothing about animation and vigour; there is no reason that it[3] should accompany me beyond its bounds.

Non hoc amplius est liminis, aut aquæ
Cœlestis, patiens latus.[4]

My face and my eyes immediately reveal my condition.

[1] The thought comes that it is a beautiful thing to die in arms. — Virgil, *Æneid*, II, 317.

[2] To live, my Lucilius, is to be a soldier. — Seneca, *Epistle* 96.

[3] That is, youth.

[4] I can no longer expose myself on the threshold to the rain from heaven. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 10.19.

All my changes begin there, and seem a little sharper than in fact they are. I am often commiserated by my friends before I feel the reason for it. My mirror does not startle me; for even in my youth it happened more than once that I had an unusual colour and general appearance of ill presage,[1] without great harm; so that the physicians who found no inward cause to account for that outward change attributed it to the mind and to some secret passion which was preying upon me within. They were mistaken. If my body was as much ruled by me as my mind is, we should travel a little more at ease. My mind was at that time not only free from trouble, but full of satisfaction and enjoyment, as it is usually, half by its nature, half by design;

Nec vitiant artus ægræ contagia mentis.[2]

I hold that this temperament of my mind has many a time lifted up the body when it was downcast; that is often drooping, and the other, if not gay, is at least in a tranquil state of repose. I had a quartan fever for four or five months, which quite changed my appearance; my mind was always, not at ease, but cheerful. If the pain is external, feebleness and languor scarcely sadden me. I know of many bodily weaknesses, dreadful even to name, which I should fear less than a thousand passions and agitations of mind which I see everywhere. I resign myself to run no more; it is enough that I can crawl, nor do I complain of the natural decay that possesses me, —

Quis tumidum guttur miratur in Alpibus?[3] —

any more than I regret that my length of life is not as long and sound as that of an oak.

I have no grudge against my imagination; I have had few thoughts in my life which have so much as interrupted my slumber, unless those of desire, which aroused me without discomforting me. I seldom dream, and then it is of

[1] *De chausser ainsin un teinct et un port trouble et de mauvais prognostique.*

[2] And the infection of my sick mind does not harm my body. — Ovid, *Tristia*, III, 8.25.

[3] Who is surprised at a goitre in the Alps? — Juvenal, XIII, 162.

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fantastic, chimerical things, produced usually by amusing thoughts, absurd rather than melancholy; and I hold that it is true that dreams are faithful interpreters of our inclinations, but that there is skill in assorting and understanding them.

(*c*) Res quæ in vita usurpant homines, cogitant, curant, vident,
Quæque agunt vigilantes, agitantque, ea sicut in somno accidunt,
Minus mirandum est.[1]

Plato says, moreover, that it is the office of prudence to draw from them prophetic instructions for the future.[2] I see nothing in that save the marvellous experiences related by Socrates, Xenophon, and Aristotle, men of unimpeachable authority.[3] Histories relate that the Atlantes [4] never dreamed, and that they never ate any thing which had been killed; [5] this last fact I add inasmuch as it is, perchance, the reason why they do not dream; for Pythagoras ordered food to be prepared in a certain way to make dreams appropriate to the occasion.[6] Mine are gentle and cause in me neither motions of the body nor vocal utterances. I have seen in the course of my life many persons extraordinarily excited by them. The philosopher Theon walked when dreaming, and likewise the servant of Pericles, even on the roof and ridge-pole of the house.[7]

(*b*) At table I rarely make a choice, but take the first and nearest dish, and I change reluctantly from one flavour to another. The crowding of dishes and courses is to me as disagreeable as any other crowd. I am easily satisfied with a few dishes, and I detest the opinion of Favorinus, that at a banquet the dish for which you have an appetite must be

[1] It is little wonder that the things which men use in life, and think about and look after and see and do, when they are awake, they see in dreams. — Cicero, *De Divin.*, I, 22; verses taken from a play of Attius (*Brutus*).

[2] See the *Timæus*, book II. [3] See Cicero, *De Divin.*, I, 25.

[4] The inhabitants of the Atlas mountain range.

[5] See Herodotus, IV, 184.

[6] See Cicero, *De Divin.*, II, 58.

[7] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Pyrrho.*

taken from you and a new one always substituted for it; and that that is a most niggardly supper-party at which the guests are not satiated with the rumps of various birds, and that only the beccafico deserves to be eaten whole.[1] I make constant use of salt meat, yet I like bread better unsalted, and my baker prepares no other kind for my table, contrary to the customs of the country. In my childhood, I had to be corrected chiefly for my refusal of things which are commonly best liked at that age — sugar-plums, preserves, and cakes. My tutor fought against this aversion to dainties as being due to a form of daintiness; and it is in fact nothing else than a delicacy of taste, whatever it may be affected by.[2] He who rids a child of a certain special and persistent liking for brown bread and bacon, or for garlic, cures him of daintiness. There are those who appear as if it were hard, and required patience, to go without beef and ham, when they have partridges; this gives them pleasure; [3] this is the daintiness of the dainty, it is the fastidiousness of an easy lot, which finds usual and familiar things distasteful; (*c*) *per quæ luxuria divitiarum tædio ludit.*[4] (*b*) To fail to find good cheer in what is so to another, to have special regard to one's diet, is the essence of this defect;

Si modica cœnare times olus omne patella.[5]

There is, indeed, this difference, that it is better to limit one's desire to the things most easily to be had; but it is always a defect, to be limited. I used to call a kinsman of mine fastidious, who, from having lived in our galleys, had unlearned the use of our beds, and the habit of undressing when he went to sleep.

If I had male children, I should readily wish for them my own fortune; the good father whom God gave me, to

[1] See Aulus Gellius, XV, 8.2. Montaigne is mistaken here. The opinion of Favorinus (an orator of the second century B.C.) was, according to Aulus Gellius, the same as Montaigne's.

[2] *Où qu'il s'applique.*

[3] *Ils ont bon temps.*

[4] Whereby luxury mocks at the tedium of riches. — Seneca, *Epistle* 18.

[5] If you are afraid to dine on all kinds of vegetables from a dish of moderate size. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 5.2.

whom I can offer naught save the recognition of his kindness, — but that certainly of the liveliest, — sent me from my cradle to be brought up in a little village of his, and kept me there whilst I was at nurse and even longer, fashioning me to the most humble and simple way of living. [a] *Magna pars libertatis est bene moratus venter.*[1] [b] Never assume yourself, and still less give to your wives, the charge of their[2] nurture; leave it to fortune to shape them under general and natural laws; leave it to habit to train them to frugality and hardship, so that they may have rather to descend from harsh conditions than ascend to them. My father's idea aimed also at another purpose — to connect me with the people and with the condition of men who need our assistance; and he judged that I should be inclined to look rather toward him who holds out his arms to me than toward him who turns his back on me. And it was for this reason also that he selected, to hold me at the font, persons of the most lowly fortunes, in order to bind and attach me to them.

His plan has not succeeded at all badly; I readily associate with men of humble condition, whether because there is more vanity in so doing, or from innate compassion, which in me is infinitely powerful. [c] The party condemned by me in our civil wars I shall condemn the more bitterly if it becomes flourishing and prosperous; it will be in a way to conciliate me somewhat, if I see it depressed and crushed. [d] How gladly I contemplate the noble spirit of Chelonis, daughter and wife of kings of Sparta. Whilst Cleombrotus her husband, during the commotion in his city, had the advantage over Leonidas her father, she was a good daughter and joined her father in his exile, in his wretchedness setting herself in opposition to the victor. Fortune changing, we see her, her will changing with their fortune, bravely take her place by the side of her husband, whom she followed wherever his disasters carried him, having, it seems to me, no other desire than to unite herself to the party where she was most needed and where she most evinced her compassion.[3] I incline more naturally to the example of Flaminius,

[1] A great part of liberty is a well-ordered stomach. — Seneca, *Epistle* 123.

[2] That is, the children's.

[3] See Plutarch, *Lives of Agis and Cleomenes*.

who gave himself to those who needed him more than to those who could benefit him,[1] than I do to that of Pyrrhus, ready to humble himself before the great and to lord it over the lowly.[2]

Long sitting at table is (*c*) wearisome and (*b*) harmful to me; for, because I formed this habit when a child, for lack of something better to do, I eat as long as I am at table; therefore, at my own house, although our meals are of the shortest, I prefer to sit down a little after the others, after the habit of Augustus; [3] but I do not imitate him in leaving the table before the others. On the contrary, I like to be quiet for a long while afterward, and to listen to talk, provided that I take no part in it; for it tires me and injures me to use my voice when my stomach is full; whilst I find the exercise of talking loud and disputing before meals very healthful and agreeable. (*c*) The ancient Greeks and Romans were wiser than we, assigning to eating, which is a principal action of life, several hours of the day and the better part of the night, if some other unusual employment did not keep them from it; eating and drinking less hastily than we, who do every thing post-haste, and protracting that natural pleasure more at leisure and by habit, intermixing with it different kinds of profitable and agreeable intercourse.

(*b*) Those whose concern it is to take care of me can easily take away from me what they consider to be injurious to me; for about such things I never desire, or find lacking, what I do not see; but, on the other hand, they waste their time in preaching abstinence to me about the things before me; so that, when I wish to fast, I must be separated from the other diners and have just so much put before me as there is need of for a dietary repast; [4] for if I sit down at the table, I forget my resolution. When I order a change in the preparation of some dish, my people know that it means that my appetite has failed, and that I shall not touch it. I like all those things little cooked that can bear it, and I like them very tender, and even, as to many, changed in their smell. Toughness is the only thing in

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Flaminius.*
[2] See Idem, *Life of Pyrrhus.*
[3] See Suetonius, *Life of Augustus.*
[4] *Une reglée collation.*

general that annoys me (as for any other quality, I am as indifferent and as patient as any man I have known); so that, contrary to common taste, even among fish it happens that I find some too fresh and too hard. It is not the fault of my teeth, which have always been good even to excellence, and which old age only now begins to threaten. I learned in childhood to rub them with my napkin in the morning and also on going to and leaving the table.

God is gracious to those from whom he withdraws life by degrees; that is the sole benefit from old age; the final death will be so much the less complete and less hurtful; it will kill only a half or a quarter of a man. Here is a tooth which has just fallen out painlessly, of itself; it was the natural term of its duration, and that part of my being, and many other parts, amongst those which were the most active and held highest rank during my years of vigour, are already dead, and others half dead. Thus it is that I melt away and escape from myself. What folly would it be for my understanding to regard the beginning of the coming fall, already so far advanced, as if it were from the top.[1] I do not hope for such a fate. (*c*) In truth, I derive my chief consolation as to my death, in thinking that it will be of a reasonable and natural kind, and that I can henceforth neither demand nor hope for other than unwarranted kindness from destiny. Men persuade themselves that in former times we had longer lives as well as greater stature; but they are deceived, and Solon, who was of those old days, fixes the extreme duration of life at seventy years.[2] I, who have so greatly revered in all things that ἄριστον μέτρον [3] of ancient times, and who have so regarded the mean as the most perfect measure — shall I lay claim to a measureless and prodigious old age? Whatever happens in opposition to the course of nature may be unpleasant; but what happens in accordance with nature must always be agreeable; *omnia quæ secundum naturam fiunt sunt habenda in bonis;* [4]

[1] *Comme si elle estoit entiere.* [2] See Herodotus, I, 32.

[3] Excellent mediocrity. — See Diogenes Laertius: "that excellent mediocrity, so highly commended of old, and especially by Cleobulus, one of the seven sages of Greece."

[4] All things that are done according to nature are to be accounted as good. — Cicero, *De Senectute*, XIX.

for this reason, as Plato says, the death that comes by wounds or disease is violent; but that which overtakes us led by old age is the easiest of all and in some degree delightful.[1] *Vitam adolescentibus vis aufert, senibus maturitas.*[2]

(*b*) Death is mingled and confused with our life everywhere; decay anticipates its hour and insinuates itself even into the very course of our progress. I have portraits of myself at five-and-twenty, and at five-and-thirty years of age; I compare them with the one of to-day: in how many ways are they no longer me! How much more distant my present aspect is from those than from that of my death! It is too great an abuse of Nature to drag her so far that she is constrained to quit us, and to abandon our guidance, our eyes, our teeth, our legs, and all the rest, to the mercy of external and solicited health, and, weary of following us, to resign us into the hands of art.

I am not extremely fond of either salads or fruit, except melons. My father detested every sort of sauce; I like them all. Overeating does me harm; but as to quality, I have as yet no certain knowledge that any thing eatable is injurious to me; as also I pay no attention to the full moon, new moon, or autumn and springtime. There are irregular and unknown processes within us — as to radishes, for example: at first I found them good for me, then disagreeable, and now good again. In many things I perceive that my stomach and my appetite thus vary; I have changed from white wine to red, and then from red to white. I am fond of fish, and make Lent of Shrove-tide,[3] and fast days of feast days. I believe what some people say, that it is more easy of digestion than flesh. As I make it a point of conscience not to eat meat on fish day, so does my taste bid me not to mix fish with flesh: the contrast seems to me too great.

In my youth I used sometimes to go without a meal, either to sharpen my appetite for the morrow (for, as Epicurus fasted and ate sparingly to accustom his enjoyment

[1] See Plato, *Timæus*.

[2] Young men die by violence, old men of maturity. — Cicero, *De Senectute*, XIX.

[3] *Fais mes jours gras des maigres.*

in it to dispense with profusion,[1] I, on the contrary, do this to train my enjoyment to profit better by profusion and to make more lively use of it), or to maintain my strength to serve in some action of body or mind (for both become cruelly sluggish with repletion, and above all things I detest that senseless coupling of a goddess so wholesome and alert with that windy, belching little god, all puffed up with the fumes of his liquor), or to cure my sick stomach, or because there was no fit company; for I say, with this same Epicurus, that it needs not to consider so much what we eat as with whom we eat;[2] and I applaud Chilo for not choosing to promise to go to Periander's banquet before he had been told who the other guests would be.[3] No dish is so agreeable to me, no sauce so appetising, as the pleasure derived from the company. I believe that it is healthier to eat more slowly and less at a time and to eat more often, but I like to give appetite and hunger their due; I should have no pleasure in being forced to three or four meagre meals, straggling through the day, like medicine. (*c*) Who would assure me that the ready appetite which I had this morning I shall find again at supper? Let us, old men especially, seize the first opportune moment that comes to us; let us leave hopes and prognostications to the almanack-makers. (*b*) The last fruit of my health is pleasure; let us cling to the first that comes, present and known. I avoid persistency in these laws for fasting; he who wishes a mode of action to be of service to him, let him shun continuing in it; we become hardened to it, our powers fall asleep in it; six months later you will have so wonted your stomach to it that your only profit will be the having lost the freedom of using it otherwise without harm.

I have my legs and thighs no more warmly clad in winter than in summer — simply a silk stocking. I have gone so far to guard against colds as to keep my head warmer, and, because of my colic, my stomach; my maladies became accustomed to it in a few days and scorned my ordinary precautions. I got from a skull-cap to a night-cap, and, out of

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 18.
[2] See Idem, *Epistle* 19.
[3] See Plutarch, *Banquet of the seven wise men.*

doors, from a common cap to a quilted hat.[1] The wadding of my doublet now serves only to give it shape; it is of no use unless I add to it the skin of a hare or a vulture, with a skull-cap on my head. Follow this gradation and you will go a fine pace. I shall do nothing of the sort; I would gladly recede from the beginning I have made, if I dared. If you fall into some new discomfort, this alteration for the better is of no further use to you; you are accustomed to it; you must seek another change. Thus are they ruined who allow themselves to become entangled in enforced regulations, and who are superstitiously bound to them; they need still more of them, and yet more again, and still others; there is no end.

It is much more convenient for our employment and our pleasure to do as the ancients did — go without dinner and postpone eating heartily until the hour of retirement and rest, without interrupting the day; so I used formerly to do. I have learned since by experience that, on the contrary, it is better to dine at mid-day, and that digestion goes on better when one is awake. I am but little subject to being thirsty, whether I am well or ill; when ill, my mouth is apt to be dry, but without thirst, and ordinarily I drink only from the desire that comes to me with eating, and far on in the meal. I drink pretty well for a man of common make: in summer and at an appetising meal I not only go beyond the limits of Augustus, who drank precisely three times,[2] but, not to infringe the rule of Democritus, who forbade stopping at four as an unlucky number,[3] I go on at times to five — about three half-pints; for small glasses are my favourite, and it pleases me to empty them, which others avoid doing as unseemly. I weaken my wine, often with a half, some times with a third, as much water; and when I am in my own house, following an old custom which my father's physician prescribed for my father and himself, what I need is mixed in the buttery some hours before it is served. (*c*) It

[1] *J'estois monté d'une coife à un couvrechef, et d'un bonnet à un chapeau double.*

[2] See Suetonius, *Life of Augustus.*

[3] See Erasmus, *Adages*, II, 3.1. According to Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, XXVIII, 17) it was *Demetrius* (a physician) who laid down this rule in a book about the number four.

is said that Cranaus, King of the Athenians,[1] was the first to follow this practice of diluting wine; whether useful or no, I have heard debated. I consider it more proper and more healthful that children should not make use of wine until after sixteen or eighteen years of age. (*b*) The most customary and common form of life is the most excellent; any peculiarity, it seems to me, should be avoided, and I should as much detest a German who mixed water with his wine as a Frenchman who drank his pure. Public custom gives the law in such matters.

I dread a heavy atmosphere and I mortally detest smoke, — the first repairs that I hastened to make in my house were to the chimneys and privies, the common and intolerable defect of old buildings, — and I count amongst the severities of war the thick clouds of dust in which we are buried all day long in hot weather. My respiration is free and easy; and my colds generally pass away without affecting the lungs and without a cough. The severity of summer is more harmful to me than that of winter; for, besides the discomfort of the heat, which is less remediable than that of cold, and besides the force of the sun's rays on the head, my eyes are hurt by any brilliant light; I could not now dine sitting opposite a burning, blazing fire. In the days when I was more in the habit of reading, I used to place a piece of glass over the page, to deaden the whiteness of the paper, and obtained much relief. I do not know [at fifty-four years of age] [2] the use of spectacles, and I see as far as I ever did and as any other; it is true that, toward nightfall, I begin to feel difficulty and inability in reading, a use of my eyes which has always been hard on them, especially at night. (*c*) Here is one step down, barely perceptible; I shall take another, a second to a third, a third to a fourth, so gently that I shall be stark blind before I am aware of the failure and old age of my sight, so skilfully do the Fates untwist our lives! I am likewise in doubt whether my hearing is hesitating about growing dull; and you will see that, when I have half lost it, I shall still lay the blame on the voices of those

[1] According to Athenæus (II, 2) it was not Cranaus, but Amphictyon, his successor.

[2] The phrase in brackets was omitted in 1595.

who speak to me; we must force the soul to exert itself, to make it perceive how it ebbs away.

(*b*) My gait is quick and firm; and I know not which of the two, my mind or my body, I can with most difficulty keep quiet.[1] The preacher is a good friend to me who can compel my attention through a whole sermon. In places of ceremony, where every one is so stiffened in bearing, where I have seen the ladies keep even their eyes so fixed, I can never succeed in preventing some part of me from being always restless; although I am seated, I am not settled[2] [and as for gesticulation, I am rarely to be found without a stick in my hand, whether on horseback or on foot].[3] (*c*) As the chambermaid of Chrysippus the philosopher said of her master that he was drunk only in his legs, for he was wont to keep them moving in whatever position he was (and she said it at a time when, his companions being excited by wine, he felt no effect from it),[4] so it might be said of me, from childhood, that either insanity or quicksilver is in my feet, since I so naturally keep them moving and shifting, wherever I put them.

(*b*) To eat greedily, as I do, is unmannerly, besides being harmful to health, and, indeed, to pleasure. I often bite my tongue, sometimes my fingers, in my haste. Diogenes, observing a child who was eating dust, gave his tutor a buffet.[5] (*c*) There were men at Rome who taught the art of eating gracefully as well as that of so walking.[6] (*b*) I lose from hasty eating the opportunity to talk, which is such a pleasant seasoning of a repast, provided that the talk be appropriate, amusing, and brief.

There is jealousy and envy between our pleasures: they clash and get in one another's way. Alcibiades, a man who well understood how to make good cheer, banished even music from the table because it might disturb the charm of discourse, (*c*) for the reason which Plato ascribes to him, that it is a custom amongst ordinary men to summon to their

[1] *J'ay arrestê plus malaisêement en mesme point.*
[2] *Encore que j'y sois assis, j'y suis peu rassis.*
[3] The words in brackets were omitted in 1595.
[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Chrysippus.*
[5] See Plutarch, *That virtue may be taught.*
[6] See Seneca, *Epistle* 15.

festivals players of instruments, and singers, for lack of the good discourse and agreeable conversation with which men of understanding know how to entertain one another.[1] (*b*) Varro requires these things in an entertainment: an assemblage of persons charming in appearance and agreeable in intercourse who are neither dumb nor loquacious; neatness and delicacy in the viands and the place, and pleasant weather.[2] (*c*) The art of good public entertainment is one demanding not a little skill and not a little luxury;[3] neither great generals nor great philosophers have disdained to know and practise it. My imagination has given into the keeping of my memory three such occasions, which chance made sovereignly delightful to me at different times in my more blooming years.[4] My present state debars me from the enjoyment of them, for each guest furnishes for himself the principal charm and flavour of the occasion by the appropriate temper of body and mind in which he is. (*b*) I, who carry myself close to the ground,[5] detest that inhuman wisdom which would make us disdain and be hostile to the care of the body.

I deem it equally wrong to accept natural pleasures unwillingly and to accept them too willingly. (*c*) Xerxes was a simpleton who, enwrapped in all mortal pleasures, offered a reward to him who should find others for him;[6] but scarcely less of a simpleton is he who curtails those pleasures which nature has found for him. (*b*) They must be neither sought nor shunned; they must be received. I receive them somewhat more courteously and graciously, and very readily let myself follow my natural inclination. (*c*) We have no occasion to exaggerate their emptiness: it makes itself sufficiently felt and sufficiently manifest, thanks to our feeble, kill-joy spirit, which disgusts us with them as with itself. It treats both itself and whatsoever it

[1] See Plato, *Protagoras*.

[2] See Aulus Gellius, XIII, 11.

[3] *Ce n'est pas une feste peu artificielle et peu voluptueuse qu'un bon traittement de table.*

[4] It may be remembered that it was "*en une grande fête et compagnie de ville*" that Montaigne met La Boëtie.

[5] *Qui ne manie que terre à terre.*

[6] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 7.

receives, sometimes now, sometimes then,[1] according to its own insatiable, errant, and versatile nature.

Sincerum est nisi vas, quodcunque infundis acescit.[2]

I, who boast of embracing so carefully and so fully all the conveniences of life, find therein, when I look into them thus closely, almost nothing but wind. But what of that! We are wind throughout; and the wind, wiser than we, takes pleasure in rustling and blowing, and is content with its own function, with no desire for stability or solidity, qualities not belonging to it.

The pure pleasures of the imagination, as well as its pains, some say are our greatest emotions, as the scales of Critolaus indicated.[3] It is no wonder: the imagination fashions them as she will and cuts them out of the whole cloth. Every day I see signal and, perchance, desirable examples of this. But I, being of a mixed and clumsy composition, can not be so fully engrossed by this one simple object,[4] that I do not grossly abandon myself to present pleasures of human and universal sway, perceived by the mind and by the senses conveyed to the mind.[5] The Cyrenaic philosophers maintain that, like physical suffering, bodily pleasures are the more powerful, both as being two-fold and as being more in accordance with reason.[6] There are some, as Aristotle says, who with savage stupidity shew aversion to them;[7] I know others who do the like from ambition.[8] (*b*) Why do they not also renounce breathing? Why do they not live on what belongs to them alone [with no aid from their accustomed conditions],[9] (*c*) and refuse

[1] *Tantost avant, tantost arriere.*

[2] Unless the vessel is clean, whatever you pour into it turns sour. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 2.54.

[3] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 17. The assertion of Critolaus was somewhat different; it was to the effect that the good qualities of the soul outweighed all other advantages.

[4] That is, the object presented by the imagination.

[5] *Intellectuellement sensibles, sensiblement intellectuels.*

[6] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristippus.*

[7] See *Nicomachæan Ethics*, II, 7, and III, 11.

[8] In 1588: "There are some of our youths who ambitiously declare that they tread them under foot."

[9] The words in brackets were omitted in 1595.

light because it is gratuitous, costing them no invention and no strength. (*b*) Let them try what it is to be supported by Mars or Pallas or Mercury, instead of Venus, Ceres, and Bacchus. Such boastful moods may fashion for themselves some satisfaction — for what can not the fancy do for us? but they have no sign of wisdom.[1] (*c*) Will they not, as they lie with their wives, seek the quadrature of the circle? (*b*) I detest being enjoined to have my mind in the clouds, when my body is at table. I would not have the mind nailed there or wallow there, but I would have it sit there, (*c*) not recline.

Aristippus pleaded only for the body, as if we had no soul; Zeno embraced only the soul, as if we had no body;[2] both mistakenly. Pythagoras, they say, adopted a philosophy that was all contemplation, Socrates one that was all character and action; Plato found the mean between the two.[3] But they say this only by way of talk. And the true mean is found in Socrates; and Plato is more Socratic than Pythagorean, and it becomes him better.

(*b*) When I dance, I dance; when I sleep, I sleep; aye, and when I walk by myself in a fine orchard, if my thoughts are busied part of the time with outside occurrences, I bring them back to the walk, to the orchard, to the charm of that solitude, and to myself. Nature has maternally arranged that the actions which she has imposed on us for our needs should also be pleasurable to us; and she invites us to them, not only by reason, but by appetite. It is detrimental to break her rules. When I see Cæsar, or Alexander, at the height of his great labours, so fully enjoy human and bodily pleasures, I do not say that it is a relaxing of his soul; I say that he tightens it, subjecting by strength of spirit these violent occupations and toilsome thoughts to the habits of every-day life.

(*c*) They had been wise, had they believed that here was their ordinary vocation, there the extraordinary one. We are great fools! "He passed his life in idleness," we say; "I have done nothing to-day." What! have you not lived?

[1] This sentence was omitted in 1595.
[2] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 45.
[3] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, VIII, 4.

That is not only the fundamental, but the most noble, of your occupations. "If I had been given occasion to deal with great matters, I might have shown what I could do." Have you been able to meditate on your life and arrange it? then you have done the greatest of all works. Nature, to manifest and express herself, demands nothing of Fortune: she manifests herself equally in all ranks, and behind curtains as without one. Have you learned to compose your character? you have done more than he who has composed books. Have you learned to lay hold of repose? you have done more than he who has laid hold of empires and cities. Man's great and glorious master-work is to live befittingly; all other things — to reign, to lay up treasure, to build — are at the best mere accessories and aids.[1]

(*b*) I take pleasure in seeing the general of an army at the foot of a breach which he proposes presently to assault, lending himself completely and with a free mind to his dinner and to conversation with his friends; (*c*) and in seeing Brutus, when heaven and earth had conspired against him and Roman liberty, steal from his rounds some hours of the night, to read and abridge Polybius in all freedom.[2] (*b*) It is for small souls, buried under the weight of affairs, not to know how to free themselves therefrom entirely; not to know how to leave them and return to them.

O fortes pejoraque passi
Mecum sæpe viri! nunc vino pellite curas;
Cras ingens iterabimus æquor.[3]

Whether it be in mockery or in earnest that the theological and Sorbonic wine has passed into a proverb, and their feast as well, I think there is reason that they should dine the more agreeably and gaily because they have employed the morning profitably and seriously in the occupation of their schools. The consciousness of having well spent the other hours is a good and savoury condiment of the repast. Thus have wise men lived: and that inimitable

[1] *Appendicules et adminicules.*

[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Brutus.*

[3] Ye brave men, who have often suffered with me worse things, now drown your cares in wine; to-morrow we will journey again over the boundless sea. — Horace, *Odes*, I, 7.30.

striving after virtue which amazes us in one and the other Cato, that nature stern even to inopportuneness, gently submitted to the laws of human condition, and found pleasure in those of Venus and Bacchus, (*c*) according to the precepts of their sect, which demands that the perfectly wise man be as skilled and well versed in the practice of pleasure as in any other duty of life; *cui cor sapiat, ei et sapiat palatus*.[1]

(*b*) Relaxation and facility, it seems to me, miraculously honour and best befit a strong and generous mind. Epaminondas did not think that to join in the dancing of the youths of his city, to sing and play upon instruments and to be attentively interested in these things, would detract from the honour of his glorious victory or from the perfect reformation of character that was his.[2] And amongst all the admirable actions of the younger Scipio (all things considered, the first of the Romans),[3] there is nothing which imparts to him a greater charm than to see him gaily and boyishly trifling, picking up and selecting shells on the seashore, and playing with Lælius at *Cornichon va devant;*[4] and in bad weather amusing and pleasing himself by writing comedies about the most common and vulgar actions of men.[5] (*c*) And with his head full of that marvellous enterprise against Hannibal and Africa, visiting the schools in Sicily and attending lectures on philosophy so much as to arm to the teeth the blind jealousy of his enemies at Rome.[6] (*b*) I am exceedingly vexed that the finest pair of lives in Plutarch, the lives of these two great men, was one

[1] That he who has a delicate judgement have also a delicate palate. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 8. The original reads: *Nec enim sequitur, ut cui cor sapiat, ei non sapiat palatus.*

[2] See Cornelius Nepos, *Life of Epaminondas.*

[3] In 1595 this was changed to "Scipio the elder, a person worthy to have a celestial origin attributed to him." (Livy, XXVI, 19; Valerius Maximus, I, 3.5.) The earlier text corresponds with the facts.

[4] A game of competition between two persons in soonest picking up some object. See Cicero, *De Oratore*, II, 6. This reference again is to the younger Scipio.

[5] Montaigne supposed Scipio to have had a share in writing some of the comedies of Terence. See Suetonius, *Life of Terence.* Cf. Book I, chap. 40 (Vol. I, p. 330).

[6] See Livy XIX, 19. Here the elder Scipio is referred to.

of the first to be lost.[1] Nor is there any thing more noteworthy in the life of Socrates than that, when he was quite old, he found time to be instructed in dancing and in playing on musical instruments, and considered the time well employed.[2] This same man was seen to stand in a trance an entire day and night, in the presence of the whole Greek army, surprised and preoccupied by some profound thought.[3] (*c*) He was seen, the first amongst so many valiant men of the army, to rush to the assistance of Alcibiades when overwhelmed by the enemy, to shield him with his body, and deliver him from the throng by main force of arms.[4] In the battle at Delos, when Xenophon had been thrown from his horse, Socrates raised and rescued him;[5] and of all the people of Athens, exasperated like himself at so shameful a spectacle, he presented himself the first to rescue Theramenes, whom the Thirty Tyrants were leading to death by their satellites; nor would he desist from this bold undertaking save at the remonstrance of Theramenes himself, although he was followed by but two in all.[6] He was known, when solicited by a fair one of whom he was enamoured, to maintain, if need were, a strict abstinence.[7] (*b*) He was seen constantly to march in war-time, (*c*) and to walk upon ice, (*b*) bare-footed; to wear the same garment in winter and in summer; to surpass all his comrades in patient endurance of toil; to eat not otherwise at a banquet than at his own table.[8] (*c*) He was seen for twenty-seven years to endure, with unchanging bearing, hunger, poverty, the indocility of his children, the scratches of his wife, and, finally, calumny, tyranny, prison, fetters, and poison. (*b*) But were this man challenged to drink in a contest as a

[1] This sentence was omitted in 1595. But cf. Book II, chap. 36 (Vol. III, p. 191).

[2] See Xenophon, *Banquet*, II, 15. Socrates was but sixty-nine when he died.

[3] See Plato, *Banquet*.

[4] See *Ibid.*

[5] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Socrates*.

[6] Montaigne was misled here by a mistake made by Diodorus Siculus. It was not Socrates, but Isocrates, who went to the rescue of Theramenes.

[7] See Plato, *Banquet*.

[8] See *Ibid.*

duty of courtesy, he it was in all the army who had the best of it;[1] and he refused neither to play for nuts with the children nor to ride a hobby-horse with them; and he did it well, for all actions, says philosophy, equally befit and equally honour the wise man. There are grounds for presenting the image of this personage in all patterns and shapes of perfection, and we should never be weary of doing so. (*c*) There are very few complete and spotless examples of life, and our education is wronged by setting before us every day weak and imperfect ones, scarcely of value in a single direction, which rather draw us backward, rather corrupting than correcting.

(*b*) Man deceives himself;[2] we move much more easily by going by way of the ends, where the boundary acts as check and guide, than along the broad and open mid-way, and guided by skill rather than by nature; but also much less nobly and commendably. (*c*) The grandeur of the soul comes not so much in striving for height and for advance as in knowing how to order and circumscribe itself; it considers great whatsoever is sufficient, and shews its loftiness by caring more for medium things than for eminent ones.[3] (*b*) There is nothing so fine and so justifiable as to play the man well and duly; nor any knowledge so difficult as the knowing how to live this life well; and the most inhuman of our diseases is to despise our being. He who would set his soul apart, let him do it boldly, if he can, when the body is in evil case, to free it from the contagion; at other times, on the contrary, let it assist and favour the body and not decline to share in its natural pleasures, but delight in them conjugally, bringing to them moderation, if it be the wiser, for fear lest, through indiscretion, the pleasures become unpleasing. (*c*) Excess is the pest of pleasure, and self-restraint is not its scourge, it is its spice. Eudoxus, who placed pleasure as the sovereign good, and his companion, who held it at so high value, tasted it in its most charming sweetness by means of self-restraint, which in them was singular and exemplary.[4] (*b*) I enjoin my soul to regard

[1] See Plato, *Banquet*.
[2] *Le peuple se trompe*.
[3] See Seneca, *Epistle* 39.
[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Eudoxus*.

both pain and pleasure with an eye equally under control, (*c*) *eodem enim vitio est effusio animi in lætitia quo in dolore contractio*,[1] (*b*) and equally firm; but regarding the one cheerfully and the other austerely, and, according to its ability, as desirous to stretch out the one as to contract the other.[2]

(*c*) To view sanely what is good, results in viewing sanely what is evil, and pain has something not to be shunned in its gentle beginning, and pleasure something to be shunned in its final excess. Plato couples them together[3] and considers it to be the duty of fortitude to combat equally pain and the immoderate and enchanting blandishments of pleasure.[4] They are two fountains from which whosoever — it may be city, man, or beast — draws when and as much as possible, is very fortunate; the one we must take as medicine and as a necessity, more sparingly; the other from thirst, but not to drunkenness.[5] Pain and pleasure, love and hatred, are the first things of which a child is sensible; if, when reason comes, these things are governed by it, that is virtue.[6]

(*b*) I have a vocabulary of my own; I pass the time, when it is bad and disagreeable; when it is good, I do not desire to pass it, I savour it and detain it; we must hurry over what is bad, and rest in what is good. These common phrases, "pastime" and "passing the time," represent the custom of those prudent folk who think that they can make no better use of life than to glide through it and evade it, to pass it, to shun it, and, so far as in them lies, to ignore it and fly from it as a troublesome and contemptible sort of thing. But I recognise it to be otherwise, and I find it valuable and agreeable even in its last stages, in which I now hold it; and Nature has put it into our hands surrounded with circumstances so favourable that we have only ourselves to blame if it harasses us and escapes us unprofitably.

[1] For a swelling of the soul in joy is as blameworthy as its contraction in grief. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, IV, 31.

[2] *D'en esteindre l'une que d'estendre l'autre.*

[3] See Plato, *Phædo;* cf. Book II, chap. 20 (Vol. III, p. 88).

[4] See Idem, *Laws*, book I.

[5] See *Ibid.*, book I.

[6] See *Ibid.*, book II.

(*c*) *Stulti vita ingrata est, trepida est, tota in futurum fertur.*[1] (*b*) Nevertheless, I prepare myself to lose it without regret, as a thing by its nature subject to be lost, not as being annoying and irksome. (*c*) On the other hand, to dislike to die rightly befits only those who take pleasure in living. (*b*) There is husbandry in the enjoyment of life; I enjoy it twice as much as others do, for the proportion of enjoyment depends on the more or less care we give it. At this hour especially, when I perceive my life as so brief in point of time, I desire to enlarge it and increase it in weight; I desire to check the promptitude of its flight by the promptitude of my grasp, and by the vigour of my use of it to counterbalance the speed of its flow; in proportion as my possession of life is shorter, I must needs make it deeper and fuller.

Others feel the charm of contentment and prosperity; I feel it as they do, but not merely in passing and gliding along; it must be studied, relished, and meditated upon, that we may render for it adequate thanks to him who grants it to us. They enjoy other pleasures as they do that of sleep, without recognising them. To the end that even sleep should not escape me thus stupidly, I have in other days found it well that I should be disturbed in my sleep, in order that I might catch sight of it. I hold consultation between a pleasure and myself;[2] I do not skim over it; I sound it and bend my reason, grown peevish and averse, to receive it. Do I find myself in a tranquil frame of mind? Is there some pleasure that tickles me? I do not let it play tricks with my senses, I associate my soul with it, not to be entangled therein, but to enjoy herself; not therein to be lost, but to be found; making use of her, for her part, to regard herself in this prosperous condition, to weigh and to estimate this good-fortune, and to amplify it. She measures how much she owes to God for being at rest in her conscience and in other inner perturbations, in having the body in natural health, enjoying in an orderly and suitable fashion the exercise of the easy and agreeable functions whereby

[1] A fool's life is thankless, anxious, concerned wholly with the future. — Seneca, *Epistle* 15.

[2] *Je consulte d'un contentement avec moy.*

it is his pleasure, of his grace, to compensate the sorrow with which his justice in its turn smites us; how much it is worth to her to be so situated that, wherever she turns her eyes, the sky is serene about her: no desire, no fear or doubt which troubles the air; no difficulty, (*c*) past, present, or future, (*b*) over which her imagination does not pass scatheless. Much light is thrown on this consideration by the comparison of different conditions: thus I represent to myself in a thousand aspects those who are carried away and overthrown by chance or by their own error, and also those more akin to me who receive their good-fortune negligently and carelessly. These are people who really "pass their time"; they pass beyond the present and what they possess, to wait upon hope, and for shadows and vain images which fancy puts before them, —

> Morte obita quales fama est volitare figuras,
> Aut quæ sopitos deludunt somnia sensus,[1] —

which hasten and prolong their flight, the more they are followed after. The fruit and the object of their pursuit is to pursue; as Alexander said that the end of his labour was to labour,[2] —

> Nil actum credens, cum quid superesset agendum.[3]

For my own part, then, I love life and cultivate it, as it has pleased God to bestow it upon us. I have no desire that it should be without the need of eating and drinking, (*c*) and it would seem to me to err not less excusably to desire that that necessity might be double; *sapiens divitiarum naturalium quæsitor acerrimus;*[4] (*b*) or that we should support ourselves simply by putting into the mouth a little of the drug by which Epimenides deprived himself of appetite

[1] Like the images which, men say, flit about after death, or the visions that mock our senses in sleep. — Virgil, *Æneid*, X, 641.

[2] See Arrian, V, 26.220.

[3] Believing that nothing was done so long as any thing remained to be done. — Lucan, II, 657. The reference in Lucan is not to Alexander, but to Cæsar.

[4] A wise man is a most earnest seeker of the treasures of nature. — Seneca, *Epistle* 119.

and nourished himself;[1] or that we should stupidly beget children by the fingers or the heels, (*c*) but, reverently speaking, that we might also beget them by the fingers and the heels voluptuously; (*b*) or that the body should be without desire and without pleasing excitement — those are ungrateful and iniquitous lamentations. I heartily and gratefully accept what Nature has done for me, and take pleasure in it and am satisfied with it. It does wrong to that great and all-powerful Giver to despise his gift, to impair it and deface it; (*c*) being all good, he has made all things good; *omnia quæ secundum naturam sunt æstimatione digna sunt*.[2]

(*b*) Of the opinions of philosophy, I embrace more freely those which are most solid, that is to say, most human and most natural to us;[3] my judgements are, conformably to my character, unassuming and humble. (*c*) Philosophy plays the child to my thinking when she betakes herself to logic-chopping[4] to preach to us that it is an unnatural alliance to marry the divine with the terrestrial, the reasonable with the unreasonable, the harsh with the indulgent, the upright with the crooked; that carnal enjoyments partake of the brute, unworthy to be tasted by the wise man — the sole pleasure he may derive from the possession of a young wife; that it is the pleasure his conscience feels in performing a due action, like putting on his boots for a necessary ride. Its disciples could have had no more reason and vigour au depucelage de leurs femmes than in such teaching. This is not what Socrates says, the teacher of philosophy and our instructor: he prizes bodily pleasure as he ought, but he places above this that of the mind as having more strength, steadiness, facility, variety, and dignity. This pleasure, according to him, does not by any means stand alone (he is not so irrational) but is simply first; for him, moderation tempers, not opposes, pleasure.

(*b*) Nature is a gentle guide, but not more gentle than

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Epimenides;* Plutarch, *Banquet of the seven wise men.*

[2] Every thing that is according to nature is worthy of esteem. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, III, 6. The quotation is taken, with some modification, from two sentences.

[3] *Les plus humaines et nostres.* [4] *Quand elle se met sur ses ergots.*

prudent and just. (*c*) *Intrandum est in rerum naturam et penitus quid ea postulet pervidendum.*[1] (*b*) I seek everywhere her track; we have confused it with artificial traces; (*c*) and that sovereign good of the Academic and Peripatetic sects, which is to live according to nature, becomes from this cause difficult to limit and explain; and that of the Stoics, akin to it, which is to concur with nature. (*b*) Is it not an error to consider some actions less worthy because they are necessary? Truly they will not drive it out of my head that the marriage of pleasure and necessity is very suitable, (*c*) for which, says one of the ancients, the gods always conspire.[2] (*b*) Wherefore shall we disunite by separation a fabric woven of so close and fraternal a correspondence? On the contrary, let us confirm it by mutual services; let the mind arouse and vivify the dulness of the body, the body check the frivolity of the mind and steady it. (*c*) *Qui velut summum bonum laudat animæ naturam, et tanquam malum naturam carnis accusat, profecto et animam carnaliter appetit, et carnem carnaliter fugit; quoniam id vanitate sentit humana, non veritate divina.*[3]

(*b*) There is in this gift bestowed upon us by God no part undeserving our attention; we must account for it to a hair. And a mandate to man to conduct himself according to his condition is explicit, direct, and very important; and the Creator has given it to us seriously and sternly. (*c*) Authority alone can influence an ordinary intellect, and it has the more weight in a foreign tongue; let us make use of it here. *Stultitiæ proprium quis non dixerit ignave et contumaciter facere quæ facienda sunt; et alio corpus impellere, alio animum; distrahique inter diversissimos motus?* [4]

[1] We should enter into the nature of things and see thoroughly what it demands. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, V, 16.

[2] See Plato, *Laws*, book VII.

[3] Surely he who praises the nature of the soul as the highest good, and condemns the nature of the flesh as an evil, seeks the soul carnally and shuns the flesh carnally, since he does it from human vanity, not from divine truth. — St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XIV, 5.

[4] Who will not say that it is the nature of folly to do in a slothful and stubborn way what is to be done, to drive the body in one direction, the soul in another, and to be torn apart by the most contrary movements? — Seneca, *Epistle* 74.

(*b*) So then, as proof, make some one tell you some day the thoughts and fancies that he admits into his head and for which he turns his thoughts from a good repast and regrets the hour that he spends in eating: you will find that there is nothing so insipid in all the food on your table as this fine communing with his soul (for the most part it would be better worth while for us really to sleep, than to keep awake for that for which we do keep awake); and you will find that his thoughts and intentions are worth less than your dish of hash. Were they the mental raptures of Archimedes himself — what then? I do not here touch upon, and do not confuse with monkey-like men such as we ourselves are, occupied with vain desires and cogitations, those venerable souls uplifted by the ardour of devotion and religious feeling to a constant and scrupulous meditation upon divine things; (*c*) who, anticipating, by force of a lively and vehement hope, the habit of eternal nourishment, the final aim and last step of Christian desires and the sole constant and incorruptible pleasure, scorn to pay heed to our necessitous, shifting, and ambiguous needs, and readily resign to the body the care and use of sensual and temporal food. (*b*) This [1] is a study of special honour. (*c*) Between you and me, these are things that I have always seen to be singularly accordant: super-celestial beliefs and sub-terrestrial morals. (*b*) Our studies are all of this world, and of the things of this world the most natural are the best.[2]

Æsop, that great man, saw his master make water as he walked. "What," said he, "must we do that as we run?" [3] Use our time as best we may, there will still be much left that is unemployed and ill employed. Our mind apparently has too few other hours to do its business without disassociating itself from the body for that brief space which it requires for its need. There are men who desire to put themselves outside themselves and escape from being men; it is mere foolishness; instead of transforming themselves into angels, they transform themselves into beasts; instead of uplifting themselves, they degrade themselves. (*c*) Those transcen-

[1] The meditation of the "venerable souls."

[2] This sentence was omitted in 1595.

[3] *Nous faudra-il chier en courant?* See Planudes, *Life of Æsop.*

dent humours terrify me like lofty and inaccessible places; and nothing is so difficult for me to swallow in the life of Socrates as his trances and his dæmon, and nothing so human in Plato as that because of which they say that he was called divine. (*b*) And of our branches of knowledge those seem to me to be the most earthly and low which are highest mounted; and I find nothing so despicable and so mortal in the life of Alexander as his fancies about his immortalisation.[1] Philotas quipped him amusingly by his rejoinder. He had congratulated him by letter on the oracle of Jupiter Ammon, which had placed him amongst the gods. "So far as you are concerned, I am very glad about it; but there is ground for pitying men who have to live with a man and obey him, who surpasses and is not content with the proportions of a man." [2]

(*c*) Dis te minorem quod geris, imperas.[3]

(*b*) The admirable inscription with which the Athenians commemorated the visit of Pompeius to their city is conformable with my thoughts:

D'autant es tu dieu comme
Tu te recognois homme.[4]

It is an absolute and, as it were, divine perfection to be able to enjoy obediently one's existence. We seek other conditions because we do not understand the use of our own, and go outside of ourselves because we know not what

[1] See Quintus Curtius, IV, 7.29 and 30; VIII, 5.13.

[2] See Idem, VI, 9.

[3] It is because you submit to the gods that you rule. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 6.5.

[4] Thou art a god inasmuch as thou dost recognise thyself to be a man. — See Plutarch, *Life of Pompeius:* "As he left the city of Athens, he read two couplets which had been written in praise of him; one within the gate, which ran:

'D'autant es tu dieu comme
Tu te recognois homme';

and the other outside the same gate:

'Nous t'attendions, nous te voions,
Nous t'adorons, et convoyons.'"

is taking place. (*c*) Much good does it do us to mount on stilts, for on stilts we must still walk with our legs; and on the loftiest throne in the world we sit only on our buttocks. (*b*) The finest lives are, to my thinking, those which are conformed to the common human model, with regularity, with nothing wonderful or extravagant. Old age, indeed, needs to be treated a little more gently. Let us commend it to that God who is the protector of health and wisdom, but cheerful and companionable.

> Frui paratis et valido mihi,
> Latoë, dones, et, precor, integra
> Cum mente; nec turpem senectam
> Degere, nec cythara carentem.[1]

[1] Grant, I pray, son of Latona, that I enjoy in full health, and with mind unimpaired, the goods that have been prepared for me; and that my old age be not unhonoured, nor lack the lyre. — Horace, *Odes*, I, 31.17.

THE END

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